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BY

Theodore
HENRY T. TUCKERMAN.

AUTHOR OF "THE ITALIAN SKETCH-BOOK," "ISABEL, OR SICILY," "ARTIST-LIFE," "THOUGHTS ON THE POETS," "THE OPTIMIST," "LIFE OF COMMODORE TALBOT," ETC.

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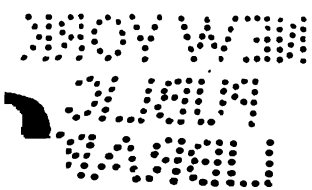

Preface.

It seems to have been taken for granted by several of the kind critics of the previous volume of this work, that the author's intention was to sustain the claims of the writers selected as representatives of each department of literature, to the honour of being their chief expositors; such, however, is not the case. The choice of writers has been quite accidental and subordinate to the principal aim, —that of grouping around them something like a brief history and analysis of the species of writing in which they excelled. The general plan and execution of the work having met with unexpected favour,—in submitting to the public an additional series, the author indulges the hope that, with this explanation of his design, the present attempt to render it complete will prove satisfactory to his readers.

New York, March, 1851.

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The Novelist.

MANZONI.

As I stood by the taffrail of the little steamer that plies up and down Lake Como, a good-natured fellow-passenger, whose costume and bearing denoted the experienced gentleman, indicated the various points of interest along the beautiful shores. It was a clear, warm day of that enchanting season, in those climates, when spring is just verging into summer. The atmosphere was transparent, and every indentation of the beach had a well-defined relief; the sails of the fishing-boats were reflected in the water as distinctly as if it were a mirror; and the cloudless sky wore the densely azure hue peculiar to that region. My companion urbanely pointed out every object worthy of note, which the shifting landscape afforded; here was the site of Pliny's country-seat, there the former residence of Queen Caroline of England, and now we are directly opposite the villa of Pasta; but there was a more genial animation in his look and voice, as a low promontory

loomed in sight, neither remarkable for the cultivation at its base, nor the picturesque beauty of its treeless slope: "Just behind that ridge," said he, "is the road which Don Abbondio followed until he encountered the *bravi* who forbade him to marry the *Promessi Sposi.*" The perfectly natural manner in which the locality of an imaginary scene was thus designated, as if quite as real and more interesting than the abodes of actual persons, struck me as the very best evidence of Manzoni's genius and fame. All genuine creations assert and maintain a distinct personality; and this is, perhaps, the readiest and most faithful test whereby the legitimate characters of fiction may be distinguished from the counterfeit. The most universal triumph of this kind is that of Shakespeare, of whose personages we habitually speak not only as actual, but world-familiar celebrities. It is probable that if the origin of those characters in fiction, which are recognised by the general feeling of mankind as living originals, could be analyzed, it would appear that their essential features were drawn carefully from life. The chief attraction of the novels of the reign of George the Third is said to have been, that the individuals depicted were well known at that period, and this fact gave a relish to the infirmities of character thus revealed. But a more recent instance occurs in regard to several of the best delineations of Dickens, whose Pecksniff, Squeers, brothers Cheeryble, and others, are confidently identified; so that, even if there is an

error in the designation, it only shows how nearly the author followed nature. Another convincing proof of the substantial relation to our experience, such daguerreotypes from life bear, is the habit so prevalent of naming our acquaintances from the well-drawn characters of able novelists. To realize the variety of fanciful beings who have been added by modern genius to the world's vast gallery of memorable portraits, it is only requisite to summon before our minds the long array of Scott's familiar creations. Charles Swain has done this in a poem entitled Dryburgh Abbey; and the obsequies of no human being were ever graced by so glorious an array of the representatives of human nature, acknowledged as such by the verdict of mankind, as this procession of his own "beings of the mind, and not of clay," which are described as following Sir Walter to the tomb.

An avidity for fabulous narrative seems to have characterized the Oriental races. The indolent life of that dreamy clime naturally induced a necessity of being amused. Professed story-tellers were patronised by those in authority; and doubtless listened to with as earnest an attention as the lazzaroni on the Mole at Naples now bestow upon a reader of Tasso. Pastorals were probably the first improvised tales of rural districts. The more exacting imaginations of Eastern potentates called forth "Arabian Nights;" and, subsequently, when the western world

was alive with the lays of troubadours and the thirst for gallant emprise, came the tales of chivalry destined chiefly to be remembered through the genial satire of Cervantes. The supremacy of the Church brought saintly legends in vogue; the spirit of maritime adventure led to the production of countless "*voyages imaginaires;*" civic revolutions, of a later period, gave birth to political romance, of which Utopia is the English type; and the more complicated interests and varied drama of modern society, finds its most welcome and perhaps faithful portraiture in one or another of the diversified species of the novel. Thus it is evident that from the Song of Solomon and the fables of mythology, to the last hot-pressed emanation from Albemarle Street, Fiction has served as a mirror to successive ages, reflecting, with more or less truth, events and manners, in hues not so emphatic as the drama, but with greater detail and more elaborate exactitude.

There are few more interesting literary processes than the composition of a novel, artistically wrought and genially inspired. If we analyze the method, it seems to be very like that by which a fine picture is executed. First, there are historical materials to collect,—the costume, manners, and spirit of the time chosen, to be studied and reproduced; then the dramatic incidents or plot to be arranged—corresponding to the action of the subject in pictorial art; the impressive background of history, the just per-

spective of time, so as to render the illusion complete; with the light and shade of cheerful and solemn feeling. These may all be derived from study and observation, and effectively arranged by skill and taste; but another, and the most vital element—the sentiment, or if the work be too prosaic to admit of such a definition, the sensation of the whole—that vague yet magnetic quality which in nature, in painting, and even in social life, we call atmosphere, must be derived from individual consciousness. This it is which brings us into relation with the story; which essentially attracts or repels; its presence gives life, and its absence makes entirely objective the most patiently finished conception. The other traits of a romance are more or less mechanical, or at least originate in the active intelligence of the writer; but this last and crowning principle emanates from the individual soul: it is that which makes the statue appear to breathe, and the picture to be a conscious reality; which carries the words of the poet into the universal heart of mankind, and causes the characters and scenery of a romance to assimilate themselves, in the imagination, with the actual and the endeared.

The gravest artistic faults or deficiencies may be counterbalanced, in a novel, by the truth, elevation, or delicacy of the sentiment, exactly as warmth and sincerity of character atone for a thousand foibles and even distasteful qualities in a friend. Thus Mackenzie's Man of Feeling, and Foscolo's Jacopo

Ortis, considered as tales, are barren of striking events, wonderful coincidences, or elaborately-drawn characters; yet the one from its gentle and resigned and the other from its thoughtful and impassioned sentiment, apparently warm from a living heart, win and impress us with an indefinite but entrancing interest. Mrs. Radcliffe's novels abound in local mistakes; Southey demonstrates that her description of Skiddaw is entirely untrue; and in "The Sicilian," she makes her heroine look from the towers of Palermo upon Mount Etna—a geographical impossibility; yet the scenes she depicts are so invested with the sentiment of wonder so largely developed in her nature, that the wizard charm of superstition haunts the reader with its gloomy fascination, notwithstanding the improbabilities of her narrative, the tame solution of her mysteries, and the inexcusable incorrectness of her topography. No one can read Corinne without impatience at the inconsistent character of Oswald, and the unsatisfactory reasons assigned for the unhappy course of events; but Madame de Staël has so deeply impregnated the imperfect drama with earnest, acute, and philosophical sentiment, with the sentiment at once of love, of genius, and of Italy, that we pause not to examine and object to the story, in our profound sympathy with the intense feeling and reflection which it sustains, like an unsymmetrical and ill-jointed trellis holding up to the air and sunshine, clusters of purple fruit and masses of autumn-tinted leaves. Some of Hans Andersen's

stories, professedly written for children, and quite fantastic in conception, are so sweetly invented and so imbued with genuine humanity, that they charm all who have not outlived heart and imagination. It is, therefore, the idiosyncrasy of the novelist that imparts the zest to his writings; it is the point where his nature overflows, that yields the peculiar charm to his inventions; and it is thus that our real sympathies are awakened. The biographers of Richardson and Mrs. Inchbald let us into the secret of that winsome tenderness that once caused us to hang fondly over Pamela and the Simple Story; it was their own prevailing characteristic. Godwin, on the same principle, excites metaphysical curiosity; Goldsmith, the sense of domestic enjoyment; Scott, chivalrous and patriotic emotion; Cooper, the zest of adventure; Dickens, convivial, pitiful, and humorous feeling; Irving, agreeable reverie; Beckford, an epicurean delight of the senses; Miss Porter and Maturin, the luxury of heroic self-devotion, and the rich but consuming excitement of ardent passion; Paul de Kock, the vagrant but spirited moods of Parisian adventure; and Balzac, the philosophical and sympathetic interest which anatomizes the inmost life of the heart.

Truth to nature, rather than dramatic effect, was the aim of Manzoni; and, as is ever the case when realized, it secured for his romance a permanent interest and celebrity. There is no attempt at brilliancy in the dialogue, no accumulation of incredible

events in the plot, and scarcely a trait of improbability in the characters. Fidelity is the charm upon which the author relies both to enlist the sympathies of the reader and disarm the opposition of the critic. It is as if a well-skilled artist were to roam, during an exciting epoch, over the fertile plains of Lombardy, and transfer scrupulously to his sketch-book, the most characteristic figures of peasant and prelate,—here a picturesque bit of landscape and there an animated group; now a monastery, and again some by-way cottage, vineyard, or shrine,—thus giving us authentic hints whereby we can reproduce in imagination, especially if seconded by memory, a satisfactory conception of all the prevailing features of the scene. The author's manner, to borrow a term so often applied to the old masters in painting, is more that of Murillo and the Flemish school than of Raphael or Correggio: except that the literary execution of Manzoni has a somewhat classical and even pedantic character. Essentially, however, the same artistic principle is relied upon. There is something of Gainsborough and Moreland in the tone of his graphic pictures; he seldom idealizes, but conscientiously represents the actual. His Promessi Sposi is attractive to Italians on the same ground that the Vicar of Wakefield is a favourite with English readers. We are interested in his characters, not because they are perfect, but because they are natural. Renzo, indeed, can scarcely be called a hero, or Lucia a heroine, in the sense in which that term

is employed by fanatical novel-readers. Neither exhibit any poetic sentimentalism. Their love is as unromantic as it is honest. He is but a skilful and industrious silk-weaver; and she, as the disappointed Bergamese, who expected to see a wonderful beauty, discovered, is only "*una contadina come tante altre;*" —a peasant girl like so many others. But, then, the attractive simplicity of nature, the affectionate disposition, the child-like faith and rustic truth of these lovers, and especially their excellence as types of a local peasantry, render them, in contrast with the remarkable vicissitudes through which they pass, objects of real and sometimes intense sympathy. There is a kind of elemental human nature about Lucia that is irresistibly charming; the very weakness and ignorance, as well as the faithful attachment and irascible temper of Renzo, are eminently illustrative of the rural population of Lombardy. It is, too, exceedingly characteristic of somewhat advanced women of the middle class of Italians, to affect the wisdom of experience, and nourish their self-esteem by a kind of pretension to knowledge of the world—which is the more diverting from the actual narrowness of their ideas and their obvious superficial knowledge and lack of real confidence. The sage counsels, and desire to have her say, ascribed to poor Agnese, peculiarly belong to her sphere and age. The ecclesiastical portraits are the most carefully laboured of all; and even allowing for the author's strong Catholic partialities, they

must be admitted to be most consistent, each with itself, and all with probability and truth. The church that can boast a Fenelon and a Cheverus, doubtless has, from time to time, included priests as exalted in their views as Federigo Borromeo, as true to an expiatory vow as Padre Cristofero, and as timid and time-serving as poor Don Abbondio. Nay, at this very time, whoever has been on familiar terms with the Italian clergy, must have encountered exceptions to the general corruption, in the form of a martyr-like asceticism or a life-devoted benevolence. In some, perhaps isolated regions there are members of the monastic fraternities that are idolized by the common people for their charity; preachers who fill a cathedral by their eloquence, and men of saintly lives whose benediction is received with awe and gratitude. In short, traces of the three prominent ecclesiastics of Manzoni's romance, may be easily detected at the present day; and, in many pious minds, yet excite the sentiments of love and reverence, which, at the period described, united the peasant to the church. It was doubtless the author's main object to vindicate the religious sentiment; to show how the essential principles of Christianity were knit into the well-being of society; and to bring into strong relief, for the advantage of a sceptical and revolutionary era, the consoling, purifying, and happy influences of the church, whose superstitions had become a byword, and whose sovereignty already yielded to military power. We can,

indeed, imagine no greater contrast than that which exists between the whole spirit and atmosphere of Manzoni's story and the times in which it appeared. The star of Europe's modern conqueror was rapidly culminating; all that was prescriptive and venerable in usage, form, law, manners, and faith, had either yielded to inexorable reform or was in a transition state; and the primal sentiments of our common nature, without whose prevailing sanction and tender intervention we can scarcely hope for the stability of any human institution, were so violently assailed, that a kind of social chaos seemed inevitable. The triumphs of Napoleon had opened the way for an apparently limitless series of experiments in government; and a fearless challenge of all authority, especially that of religion. The mental activity and civic revolutions incident to this state of things, kept Europe in a continual ferment. Old associations had no power to hedge in thought; and new combinations of events gave scope to every kind of speculative hardihood. It was the age of sudden political vicissitudes, splendid military achievements, constant social alternations, and fearless inquiry. It was an experimental, irreverent, and unbelieving age; and even at such a time, Manzoni sent forth his calm pictures of rustic life; he revived the primitive in human nature; exhibited the graces of simplicity, the moral value of faith, the charm of spotless integrity, the need of a vista through which, amid the darkness and tumult of life, glimpses could be af-

forded of heaven; the blessedness of forgiveness; the tranquil joy of expiation, the glory of repentance, and the beauty of holiness. It was like the low warbling of a lute amid the braying of trumpets; or one of the soft sunsets of Claude reflected on a thunder-cloud. It was an enterprise, in its very hopelessness and beauty, worthy of the heart of genius; and the peaceful and sweet manner in which it was achieved, evinces the dignity of scholarship and the self-possession of faith.

It has, indeed, been objected to the Promessi Sposi, that it is circumstantial even to tediousness; that it lacks vivacity of tone and variety of interest. Perhaps these and similar faults are inseparable from the author's plan; his first object being truth to nature and history, in order to render his work locally authentic, and give it a national interest; and his second to inculcate certain great principles of life and action, which he saw were lost sight of in an age of preternatural and spasmodic excitement. The polished correctness of the style, too, while on the one hand it has given the novel a classical rank and caused it to be one of the most approved text-books in the acquisition of the Italian tongue, on the other, by a certain stiffness and the use of uncommon words, occasioned by the classic fastidiousness of the author, has induced pedantry of style, the very reverse of that colloquial ease, which is so great a requisite in the popular novel. These and other incidental defects do not, however, at all inva-

lidate the well-founded claims of Promessi Sposi, as a true picture of Italian life, felicitously conceived and artistically developed.

As the artistic representative of truth and the pleasing stimulant of benign emotions, Fiction thus redeems itself from the serious objections to which it was once far more liable than at present. "It is necessary to our rank as spiritual beings," says a judicious writer, "that we should be able to invent and to behold what is not; and to our rank as moral creatures that we should know and confess that it is not." Hence the unsatisfactory blending of fact and fiction, by the excessive development of any of the elements we have designated, the exaggerations of professedly veritable travellers, the fanciful narratives of historians, as well as grossly illusive pictures of life and nature even in a romance. Such errors offend the integrity of the novelist's art exactly as mean expedients and grotesque combinations in architecture, or untrue drawing and extravagant colour in painting, or want of proportion in statuary; because such blemishes destroy the sentiment and mar the completeness of invention in writing, as well as in form or design. Legitimately produced, however, and truly inspired, fiction interprets humanity, informs the understanding, and quickens the affections. It reflects ourselves, warns us against prevailing social follies, adds rich specimens to our cabinets of character, dramatises life for the unimaginative, daguerreotypes it for the

unobservant, multiplies experience for the isolated or inactive, and cheers age, retirement, and invalidism, with an available and harmless solace. A distinguished modern statesman decided a question that arose in a social circle, by very gravely quoting a passage from Robinson Crusoe. His friends expressed their surprise that one whose pursuits were so complicated and absorbing should remember the very words of that nursery tale; he assured them he had read it once every year since he was a boy as a mental refreshment. Humboldt pauses in his description of tropical vegetation, to mention with gratitude the fact that it is associated in his mind with the correctly delineated scenery of Paul and Virginia. The philosophic Mackintosh advocates fiction because "it creates and nourishes sympathy;" and the poet Gray declared that it was heaven to pass a rainy day in reading new novels. Thus resorted to as a pastime in the intervals of more exacting studies, and at periods of convalescence or recreation, it is one of the most ready and useful of luxuries; but no more to be relied upon altogether as intellectual food, than champagne, spices, or beautiful fruit, for animal nourishment. It is, therefore, only the abuse of fiction which deadens the zest of truth, for its right office is to heighten its effect. "Matter of fact," says Hunt, "is our perception of the grosser and more external shapes of truth; fiction represents the residuum of the mystery. To love matter of fact is to have a lively sense of the visible

and the immediate; to love fiction is to have as lively a sense of the possible and the remote."

The word novel has a much higher signification than formerly. It once conveyed the idea of vapid sentimentalism or irrational romance, only adapted to very weak and morbidly fanciful tastes. It furnished pabulum to imaginary woes, and yielded unhealthy excitement to undisciplined minds. Hence the very justifiable prejudice so long cherished against this kind of reading by vigorous intellects. A half century has effected a complete revolution in this department of literature. Perhaps the first example which led to this auspicious change is the Caleb Williams of Godwin. That remarkable work proved that a story may be deeply interesting without being mainly occupied with the tender passion; and it suggested that human nature and human life afforded a boundless and most instructive field for true genius to represent. The English have excelled in fiction, perhaps, in part, from the judgment which they, of all people, know best how to bring to the arrangement of passionate and poetic materials, and thus render them harmonious and effective. If we glance at the number and variety of standard English novels that still maintain their place in select libraries, we cannot but acknowledge that our vernacular is the most prolific source of excellent fiction, in modern times. Consider, also, the important subjects these works illustrate, and how ably they have been made the exponents of grave opinion, social questions, history,

philanthropy, art, and morals. The most vivid pictures of London society, in the days of Johnson, are yet to be found in the novels of Miss Burney; and its present absurdities have been most effectually satirized by the novels of Hook. If we desire to realize the life of the East, the Anastasius of Hope is the most available *camera obscura* into which to enter and view its reflection. We are confidently referred to the novels of Smollett for an authentic character of the English navy fifty years ago. The low life of Great Britain is sketched in enduring colours by Dickens. The philosophy of common sense—that trait of national character which chiefly distinguishes the Anglo-Saxon from the southern European, is permanently elaborated in the novels of Maria Edgeworth and Miss Austin. All salient eras of human history and social life have been reproduced by modern novelists. Scottish annals and scenery may be said to have been revealed to the world by the author of Waverley; and Macaulay sustains his description of the condition of the clergy in the reign of Charles the Second, by the parsons Fielding has bequeathed. Miss Ferrier's novels have immortalized the most humorous and characteristic traits of Scotch society. The life of the north of Europe is now familiar to us through the charming tales of Miss Bremer. Lockhart and our own Ware have given adequate pictures whereby the unlearned may be initiated into that memorable epoch when the advent of Christianity introduced a new element into the life of

the Roman Empire. Systems of political economy, the questions that divide the Episcopal Church, the social problems involved in the manufacturing enterprise of England, the racy and pathetic aspects of Irish life, the biography of illustrious men, the arts of diplomacy, principles of taste, government, religion, and science, now, almost daily, find accredited and fascinating interpreters in the guise of popular novelists.

The conditions we have indicated are happily fulfilled in the Romance of Manzoni. Every one at all familiar with the public events of the time, which are made in the novel to lend the dignity of great social phenomena to the humble experiences of the hero and heroine,—will trace a scrupulous authenticity in the narrative; and not less faithful are the incidental glimpses afforded of the laws, customs, and social economy of the period. We seem, as we read, to breathe the atmosphere of that epoch when the feudal spirit yet lingered in Italy, although its practical influence was essentially modified; when haughty lords still kept their armed retainers, and could, with certain precautions, violently outrage individual rights with impunity; when the sanctions of the Church yet exercised an unquestioned authority;—the age of local warfare, of Latin edicts, of gross popular delusions, of scholastic pedantry, and fanciful philosophy. These phases of life in that day and country are brought out with remarkable tact in the course of the story. The war to settle

the succession of the ducal states of Gonzaga, and the occurrence of a famine and the plague at Milan, by arousing all the latent elements of society, give ample occasion to indicate the degree of knowledge, the tone of public opinion, and the standard of civilization then and there attained. We are admitted freely to the banquet of the lordly castle, the discussions of the piazza, the domestic life of the palace, the secrets of conventual discipline, the gossip of the *osteria*, the interviews of the archbishop, and the humble colloquies of the village hearth. Attentively regarded, they yield the most clear and reliable impressions; and the amount of positive information thus gleaned from the story, is not less remarkable than the facility with which it is suggested. The more elaborate pictures thus vividly reproduced from the dusty archives of municipal history, will bear a very thoughtful perusal. The description of the bread riots and the various scenes enacted at Milan during the ravages of the plague, have scarcely been equalled for graphic delineation and true pathos, by any of the many brilliant sketches, in the same vein, subsequently attempted by the most eloquent writers. Their beautiful diction in some cases enhances the effect; the minute circumstances and affecting points of view chosen, are such as an actual spectator would naturally have selected; while the light and shade, the impressive fact and the affecting sentiment, are blended with that inimitable skill which is only an intuition of genius. Indeed, the chastened tone of

these parts of the romance, — often affording not only room, but temptation to exaggerate, is one of its prominent merits. We do not, for a moment, lose sight of the dreadful reality on account of the melo-dramatic representation. On the contrary, the dangling hair of virgin-bodies piled on the dead-carts; the horrid buffoonery of the *monatti;* the maternal tenderness and care lavished so calmly on an infant's corse, in the midst of the licentious misery around; the remorseful terrors of the selfish noble, and the heartless cupidity of the base servant, the devotion of the benevolent, and the callous indifference of the hardened;—each individual demonstration of character and every special incident that stand out from the general record of pestilence and famine, are usually so true to the great and authenticated occurrences, that we not only confess that they might have been, but feel that they were. So much for the unity of these ghastly, yet memorable pictures. The author is equally felicitous in minor limning;—the forms of salutation, the classic oaths, the religious adjurations, the proverbs, gestures, and casual provincialisms that occur, have not only authority, but significance. Passed over, by the ordinary reader, without interest, to those familiar with the region and the classes depicted, they have a peculiar meaning and an intrinsic charm.

Manzoni has, also, a concise way of sketching a whole genus in one of the species, of exhibiting

what is characteristic of a domain or a class by a single effective specimen. Thus, in the portrait of Federigo Borromeo we have not only an historical personage, but the ideal of the scholar, saint, and gentleman combined, of that age. Perpetua's counterparts may be seen by every traveller who sojourns awhile with an Italian family of the middle class. The plants enumerated as having overgrown Renzo's garden during his banishment, might be classified in a botanical nomenclature of Lombardy. Don Ferrante's philosophical creed illustrates the scientific Quixotism then indulged by speculative minds; and a very adequate idea of the scenery of northern Italy may be derived from the account given of the different journeys of the fugitives between Milan, Monza, and Bergamo.

In the unpretending but significant tales of Dana and Hawthorne we often discover the essence of romance—the most pure and subtle elements of original fiction. Remorse has found no more refined and touching interpreter than the former; and it is rarely that what is adjacent and immediate has been so delicately and suggestively delineated as by the latter. Professional life has revealed some of its most thrilling secrets by the pen of Warren; and popular art is most vividly illustrated in Wilhelm Meister. Many of the profound laws of love and music may be learned in Consuelo; the luxuries and the psychological workings of sentiment glow and melt along the pages of Rousseau; fantasy, in its

wildest, most sublime and most exquisite play, emanates from the German novelists—now shadowy with the weird genius of Hoffman, and now aerial with the crystal grace of Undine. The iris-hues of the Midsummer Night's Dream reappear in the fairy tale; and all the virtues and the comfort of modern civilization are embodied in English stories of domestic life. But the field embraced by this endeared form of literature is too vast for specific comment. The fertility of its resources may be imagined by considering what rich elements are included in the exuberant life of the primitive fiction, the truthful consistency of the standard narrative, and the insight into men and things, of the modern fashionable novel: take, for instance, the tone of Boccaccio—the verisimilitude of De Foe, and the knowledge of the world of Thackeray;—how much of human life, both inward and outward, how many of the elemental and the manifest principles of our common nature and of universal experience, are therein combined!

Personal familiarity with the country and people described in Manzoni's novel, is almost essential to its complete enjoyment and appreciation. To have seen one of the religious processions, in Tuscany, for instance, bearing the relics of a saint for the purpose of checking a freshet or a drought, and to have watched the hopeful countenances of the rustic throng, renders far more vivid the ceremonial of escorting the gorgeously-decked remains of St. Carlo through the streets of Milan, to stay that awful

pestilence. The sight of one of the popular tumults which agitated Sicily when the cholera prevailed there, a few years since, and the ocular proof of the fanaticism of the ignorant wretches in sacrificing so many innocent victims to the suspicion of having poisoned the wells, and thus induced the disease,—brings home to the most unimaginative the frantic delusion of the Milanese, in ascribing the pestilence, whose course is so graphically described by the novelist, to the same cause. The scribes who yet sit in the squares of Palermo and Naples to indite letters for the common people, make the difficulties of Renzo in corresponding with his betrothed, appear very natural. An *habitué* of a *trattoria* in Italy, will recognise the viands, the language and bearing of the innkeepers as identical with those of our own day; and a certain extraordinary blending of acuteness and candour, of almost childish simplicity in matters of faith and feeling, and dexterity or evasion in cases involving personal safety or interest, which might appear inconsistent elsewhere, are perfectly true to Italian character. In fact, in many particulars, Hogarth and Crabbe are not more thoroughly literal interpreters of nature than Manzoni.

The monotony of provincial life in Italy, the family dictatorship, which virtually forces superfluous children to enter the cloister, and the more benign aspects of Catholicism, to those who have been in contact with the domestic life of the country, are reproduced in this story with singular truth. It

was doubtless no small part of the author's plan to touch the patriotic sensibilities of his countrymen by the nationality of his work; and this, perhaps, accounts for the fear he seems to have entertained of the slightest extravagance; and the somewhat tiresome historical interludes scattered through the romance. The sentiments unfolded are those of the author himself. He was thoroughly sincere both in his patriotism and his piety; and this is the more honourable to him inasmuch as his origin is noble, his associations of the highest kind, and his education superior; but the scholar and the man of rank were not suffered to overlay the Christian and the philanthropist. While other authors of the period scarcely professed any faith whatever, and followed their own vagrant impulses, Manzoni looked to God in meekness, and around upon his country with love. His nature was essentially contemplative; he believed rather in the victories of thought than those of the sword; and relied on the primitive and indestructible sentiments of humanity far more than external violence for the advancement of truth. His first work, Conte di Carmagnola, which appeared in 1820, a tragedy embodying the noblest self-devotion and patriotism, excited a deep interest throughout the continent. Other dramas, his famous Ode, entitled *Il Cinque di Maggio*, on the death of Napoleon, and a volume of hymns,—then a rare species of writing in Italy, increased his literary renown.

But his popularity is derived from his novel—I Promessi Sposi. He adopted this form of literature as that which gave him the surest and most extensive access to the minds of his countrymen. Scott's unparalleled success in the same department was already the literary phenomenon of the day; and to Manzoni belongs the credit of first effectively introducing the modern novel into Italy. By patient elaboration of authentic facts, by careful limning from original elements of character within his observation, by infusing the genuine sentiments of his own heart into the beings he portrayed, and by a scholar-like finish of style, he laboured to produce an unexceptionable, graphic, interesting, and standard national romance; and, however humble the sphere he chose to illustrate, he accomplished his purpose. It is a curious fact that almost the only trace of his ideal tendencies in this work, is discoverable in some of his comparisons, which, by their fancifulness, betray the poet. Otherwise the design is mainly Flemish, both in subjects and exactitude. The atmosphere, however, of the whole picture, to the view of one whose associations are enlisted, is as soft, attractive, and mellow, as that of spring in Italy. The gentle and tranquil excitements of rural life and primitive manners, touch the heart of the sympathetic reader. The resignation of Lucia, the conversion of the wicked *Innominato*, the sublime patience of Padre Cristofero, the diverting cowardice

of Don Abbondio, the shrewishness of Perpetua, the enlarged benevolence of Federigo, with the episodes of extreme human misery, and the final happy fortunes of the humble lovers, gradually win upon our calm attention, and become, at last, endeared to our remembrance.

The Censor.

STEELE.

One day, early in the last century, if an Asmodeus had peeped into a certain respectable-looking house in London, he would have seen a lady in whose beautiful countenance pride and tenderness were rarely mingled, seated alone in profound reverie, with an open letter in her hand, and writing materials on the table beside her. Her attitude and expression might have furnished captivating hints for a graceful artist. Now she nibbles the feathered end of her pen, and looks up to the ceiling, as if expecting a resolution to descend; now she disposes herself as if to write; and, anon, rises with an impatient air, and walks to and fro while perusing, for the twentieth time, the unanswered epistle; one moment she breathes a gentle sigh, and the next her fair lip is wreathed with a complacent smile. At last she re-seats herself, and begins to scribble after the manner of a wayward girl in a sentimental quandary. Although not given to rhyming, she half-unconsciously traces a couplet:—

Ah! Dick Steele, that I were sure,
Your love, like mine, would still endure!

A good psychologist might thence infer her lover's whole character. The exclamatory note suggests desire, attraction, a mesmeric influence; in fact that he was what she, at once, declared him to be to her friends—"as agreeable a man as any in the kingdom;" and what she felt him to be in her own heart, "a master of the art of love." The familiarity of the appellation indicates that he was an accessible, open-hearted, sociable fellow; while the doubt of his constancy reveals an impulsive nature. Such were, in truth, the characteristics of Steele. His numerous dedications present a versatility and tact in compliment, that show how aptly he could touch every note of elegant flattery; a vivid sense of the beautiful, especially in manners and character, displayed in his writings, evidence one of those thoroughly appreciative minds upon which no trait of female attractiveness is lost; and his own confession that, while a youth, he wrote and published the "Christian Hero," in order to commit himself before the world, to virtue and religion, and thus be shamed into consistency of demeanour, is an impressive proof of his consciousness of moral weakness.

The father of Steele was private secretary to James, first Duke of Ormond, lord lieutenant of Ireland; and his son was born in Dublin, came to

England when a child, was educated at the Charter-House School; and his first recognised literary effort was a poem called the Procession, for the funeral of Queen Mary in 1695. A naturally chivalric temper inclined him to military life; and having entered the army, he rode privately in the Guards; while ensign, he, however, made two important discoveries: one was, that his pen was likely to be a far more useful weapon than his sword; the other, that the career of a soldier would confirm ruinous habits of dissipation already contracted. It was under these impressions that he put forth the treatise to which we have alluded, an act that subjected him to frequent ridicule. In 1702, a play intended to satirize the affectation of mourning then prevalent, which he had offered to the manager of Drury, attracted the King's notice, who gave its author the post of Gazetteer. Then followed the "Tender Husband," and other successful dramatic pieces; the appointments of Stamp Commissioner, Surveyor of the Royal Stables, Governor of the Royal Company of Comedians, &c. Steele became an active pamphleteer; and in March, 1713, was expelled the House of Commons, where he represented Stockbridge, for objectionable partisan writings. Soon after the accession of George I., he was knighted, elected a member of Parliament from Yorkshire, and, after suppressing a rebellion at the North, was named one of the commissioners of forfeited estates in Scotland. He obtained a patent for his project for bringing fish to market

alive; and the great popularity of the "Conscious Lovers" gained him a royal *douceur* of five hundred pounds. He retired to Wales, after becoming paralytic; and died there on the first of September, 1729. Statistics like these, however, only serve to point out the landmarks of Steele's career. His political life has been severely criticised, although his intimates urge that he lived when party spirit ran high, and integrity was little valued; and they claim that no illiberal or ungentlemanly invectives, and no weak abuse deform his controversial papers; and that there, as in his other relations, is visible "an enthusiasm of honour." The anecdotes of his improvidence are curious and familiar; the two related by Savage, of his hiding in a tavern to get up a pamphlet to pay for his dinner, and inducing the bailiffs, who were quartered at his house, to enact the part of servants before his guests, are characteristic alike of his ready wit and painful exigencies. His domestic affections were strong, as shown in his conjugal sentiment, and fidelity to his illegitimate daughter. He built a residence in which he could not afford to live; and received, with the utmost courtesy and good nature, his friend Addison's practical reproof, administered in the shape of an execution upon the house and furniture, for an old debt of a thousand pounds, which failed however of its intent, "to awaken him from a lethargy which must end in his inevitable ruin." His social advantages were of the highest order. Not only was he

the favourite guest of the most desirable of the nobility, and the most gifted of the fair; but the political leaders, the wits, and the artists of the day were his boon companions; he was equally at home in the palace and behind the scenes; in Garth's study and Congreve's sick-chamber; he had almost daily meetings with Addison at their coffee-house; Swift called at his office for his letters; and, at his request for "an ode as of a cheerful dying spirit," to help off a musical festival he projected, Pope sent "warm from his brain"—the "Vital spark of heavenly flame."

Steele once reproved an acquaintance for looking gravely upon the unsuccessful jocularities of an ambitious wag, saying, "Do laugh, 'tis humanity to laugh;" and this kindly sympathy was never chilled by pleasure, misfortune, or age; for at Hereford, where he died, we are told that he would be carried out upon the green on summer evenings, to see the peasants divert themselves; and delighted to give an order on his agent, for a new gown to the best dancer.

Now that the political squabbles of Sir Richard are forgotten, his convivial graces vanished like the wine bubbles of an ended feast, his plays superseded by a new dramatic taste, and the weary clamour of his duns hushed in eternal silence, he rises to the imagination in the friendly guise of a "fine old English gentleman," whose finances were indeed often visionary, and whose practice was not always

reliable, but whose excellent sense and genial sentiment gave birth to one of the most pleasing and useful of literary inventions.

The art of combining utility and pleasure has advanced in the ratio of civilization; it is the great aim of modern science, the fond dream of philanthropy, the new triumph of genius. To read the glowing experiences of imaginative homœopaths and hydropaths, it would seem that the "ills that flesh is heir to" can be made, through agreeable remedial processes, the occasion of vivid enjoyment. Ideal socialists point out a way in which domestic infelicity may be rendered productive of sentimental delight. Musically organized enthusiasts indicate how the most grateful emotions are suggested by apt and exquisite harmony; while professors of magnetic science, and recipients of Swedenborg's intuitions, become intimate with truth and cognizant of spiritual life, without intellectual labour or the emancipation of death. Such, in its extreme manifestation, is the tendency to attain good through pleasure; and to realize the requisite and the desirable by virtue of inheritance; and, however fanatical in some of its pretensions, or visionary in its declared results, there is essential truth in the idea that lies at the basis of the experiment, and absolute wisdom in the spirit of its disciples. There must be relish, or there is no perfect assimilation either in physical or moral life. No idea enters into the soul except through the sympathies; thoughts, things, events, and persons,

are objective to the individual except when in relation to him; and, only through his affections, modify his nature; so that, although the ungenial may excite and invigorate, its opposite can only enrich and inspire.

In no form has the problem we have hinted, struggled more toward solution than in that of education, in the broadest acceptation of the term;—how inadequately thus far in regard to youth, may be inferred from the almost universal fact that men and women of character, when released from the prescribed routine of their first years, seek and pursue quite a different culture, according to their own wants and impulses;—and this is the only education that moulds or reproduces their latent and individual nature. It is therefore with more faith that we turn from the hackneyed and obsolete systems to which the young are usually doomed, to those varied resources and excitements designed to afford mental stimulus and direction to a later and more thoughtful era of life. The most prominent and active in our times is literature; and its most delicate and difficult office is censorship. To criticise without malignity, raise the tone of manners without assumption, gently correct, winsomely improve, unostentatiously reform, and scatter the germs of truth without intruding into the field or obstructing the pathway of another—is a task which demands a blending of judgment, nobleness, tact, and urbanity,—the knowledge and quickness of a practised man of the world, and the warm,

sympathetic heart of unsophisticated youth. Tried by such a standard we are at no loss to account for the failure of most preachers and editors in their efforts to improve society. Few unite the ability to perceive what is wanted, with the tenderness and generosity indispensable to its efficient supply.

If there was ever a man formed to discharge successfully this peculiar vocation it was Steele. His very defects were available in this regard. Had he been more of a scholar, pedantry would have formalized the colloquial style that gave him access to the multitude; with more sustained moral elevation, he could scarcely have felt that indulgence for the weaknesses of others which gave to his admonitions a sympathetic charm; more retired and fastidious in association, his address would have been less frank and brotherly. His generous impulses prevented cynicism; his spontaneous feeling warmed the actual reprover into the apparent friend; and even his convivial habits, injurious as they were to his own interests, kept the social instinct fresh, while his improvidence was a sure though melancholy check upon "the insolence of office." Akin to the most polished of his race by birth and social position, one of the fraternity of genius by virtue of his own gifts, intimate with official experience by life in the camp and the court, and brought through the vicissitudes incident to an irregular career, into familiarity with the trials of the least fortunate of mankind—he was prepared to understand and to feel in a comprehensive and

intelligent way. A social cosmopolite, a wit and a good fellow in the general tone of his nature, he was, at the same time, a devoted partisan, a chivalric friend, a man of letters, and an ardent lover—touching the circle of humanity at each salient point.

We can readily appreciate the objection of a German critic to the species of literature rendered popular by Steele,—that it tends to substitute display for erudition. This, however, is a very partial view of its merit. The world had enough profound scholars; intellectual activity, like all other social forces, at this new impulse, emerged from a monastic seclusion to enlarge and quicken the mass. It obeyed the democratic and the Christian tendency of a more liberal and enlightened era; and to this revolution, so limited and casual in its origin, we may justly ascribe the spread of intelligence and taste which distinguishes this from past centuries. Previously, except to the few, mental improvement was a vague and often a hopeless privilege. By the advent of periodical literature it became an element of ordinary life, a refreshment obtainable by the wayside of toil, and during the intervals of business. Its aim was not to convey recondite knowledge, but to excite men and women to observe, and teach them to think; to induce a love of reading, to elevate gossip into conversation, and to refine and amplify the resources of the individual and of society.

As a means of social progress it is difficult to overestimate its value. The brilliancy and power of later

writers of the same school, now render the Spectator and its immediate offspring, comparatively tame; but if the world has outgrown some of its teachings, and advanced to the relish of a more vigorous style, the method and spirit to which it gave birth retain all their interest and efficiency. Character is but an aggregate of qualities, and these are of gradual attainment; hence the foibles, errors, and social incongruities which Steele and his associates strove to reform, however apparently insignificant, were allied to the essential principles of human welfare. Before his day, England was allowed to indulge all the crudities of self-esteem with complacency. Neither law nor theology meddled with those details of conduct their professors deemed of minor importance. Hence the need of a set of lay preachers, tasteful, witty, and insinuating, to lop the excrescences, guide the blind impulses, and meliorate the life of society. If we glance at the pages of the old essayists we shall find that they made constant war upon all kinds of affectation, mercilessly exposed bullies, coxcombs, pedants, oglers, dandies, wags, croakers, coquettes, and all the gay, noisy and venomous insects that infest the social atmosphere. The strongholds of cant and ostentation were invaded; the baseness of slander unveiled; and the beauties of literature, the claims of genius, and the dignity of truth, vindicated with tact and eloquence. From the abolition of such customs as the levelling of opera-glasses before recognition, the indiscreet mention of a set of acquain-

tances outlived, and the dangling of canes from a button-hole, to the high arts of distinguishing between realities and appearances, and disengaging one's self from the opinions of others, the Spectator was the bland champion of improvement. He mingles with the *habitués* of the coffee-house, the audience and the actors at the theatre, the clubs of politicians, the festive scenes of hospitality, the grave coteries of scholars, and the affectionate gatherings around the domestic hearthstone, and thence retires to indite grateful praise or judicious censure adapted to each scene and occasion. Perhaps there is as much wisdom in such a humanitarian application of one's knowledge and sympathy, as can be discovered in the more ostentatious efforts of modern philanthropy. It was, at least, one of the primary developments of that benevolent enterprise that, in our day, exhibits itself in the writings of Crabbe and Dickens, and the teachings of Spurzheim and Combe; and in all the varied labours of men of letters and science to make the different classes of society known to one another, and promote human well-being by disseminating a knowledge of natural laws.

Those who are disinclined to recognise so wide and benign an aim in the writings of Steele, do not justly estimate the genuine nobility of his character. Perhaps to many he is most frequently remembered as a good-hearted man-about-town, with considerable wit and reckless habits. This view, though in a measure correct, is altogether inade-

quate. We find ample evidence of the generous and elevated designs he cherished. He reverenced the nature to which he would fain minister. "I consider," he says, "the soul of man as the ruin of a glorious pile of buildings; where, amidst great heaps of rubbish, you meet with noble fragments of sculpture, broken pillars and obelisks, and a magnificence in confusion." Thus, if he explored human life with a critical eye, and sometimes busied himself with its veriest details, the survey was inspired by reverence and sympathy; and amid the quaint allegories, old-fashioned modes of speech and diffuse commonplaces that sometimes weary a reader of to-day, the essays of Steele not unfrequently glide from the vivacious to the sublime, from conventionalities to philosophy, and from a question of manners to an evidence of immortality. His prefaces contain the most deliberate statement of the purposes he cherished and the motives by which he was actuated; and some of these have a cordial and noble tone that can scarcely fail to charm a generous and discriminating mind. Thus, in one instance, he observes—"When learning irradiates common life, it is then in its highest use and perfection. Knowledge of books is like that sort of lantern which hides him who carries it, and serves only to pass through secret and gloomy paths of his own; but in the possession of a man of business it is as a torch in the hand of one who is willing and able to show those who are bewildered, the way which leads to their prosperity and welfare." A

prominent object he elsewhere declares to be "to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour." Accordingly he penetrated the nooks of experience, and constantly enforced minor philosophy, so needful yet so rare, which induces the "honest and laudable fortitude that dares to be ugly;" the adoption in dress of "the medium between a fop and a sloven," and the content which dwells on "such instances of our good fortune as we are apt to overlook."

His "practical scheme for the good of society," has, therefore, continued to influence both the form and spirit of subsequent literature; and popular reading now bears its traces in the careful exposition of events, as in the Annual Register, and the minute analysis of the spirit of the age by such writers as Hazlitt. Modern reviews and novels, as well as many contributions to the daily press, are also imbued with the observant, critical, and suggestive habitudes of the original essayists. In fact, men of wit became ashamed, after so noble an example, to employ their gift otherwise than in the service of truth; and the Spectator's creed was more generally adopted even in literature,—that "the greatest merit is in having social virtues, with benevolence to mankind." At the outset, indeed, while female cultivation was rare, to be speculative was fashionable; so that Goldoni ridicules, in one of his comedies, the

lady-readers of the Spectator; but there can be little doubt that the galaxy of admirable English female writers, that adorn this century was, in part, at least, drawn into the literary firmament by the recognition and the impulses afforded by Steele and his fraternity. Mental independence was one of the happiest and most needful lessons they taught;—demonstrating that "we purchase things with our blood and money quite foreign to our intrinsic and real happiness;" that true "honour is the conscience of doing just and laudable actions, independent of the success of these actions;" and that we should aim to "banish out of conversation all entertainment which does not proceed from simplicity of mind, good-nature, friendship and truth." Another striking service rendered by this literary reform, was that of calling public attention to neglected authors. It is conceded that Addison's papers on Milton first caused Paradise Lost to be universally read and appreciated; thus literature, manners, character, and life found enlightened and affectionate interpretation, and were "touched to finer issues;" so that, by the consent of the judicious, it was recorded of Steele that he "took upon himself to be the censor of the age, and for years exercised that delicate office with suitable dignity and general approbation."

Society perpetually needs criticism; and, notwithstanding the offence which the strictures of travellers in the United States, have given our sensitive people, they have induced actual reforms. Domestic eco-

nomy is auspiciously modified by the intelligent suggestions of writers on principles of taste and the laws of health. The advantage of ventilation and ablution, the wisdom of inexpensive entertainments and refinement in public amusements, are daily more appreciated through the intelligent advocacy of literature; the architecture and furniture of dwellings cannot fail to become more fit and pleasing by means of the eloquent treatise of Ruskin; while the lionizing and blue-stocking mania is obviously on the decline since it has become the subject of masterly satire. Let us not forget that no small degree of that salutary impulse, which gave this practical direction to literature, is referable to the candid and kindly example of Steele. Women, especially, owe him no small obligation, for advocating the mental capabilities, recognising the social mission, and exposing the baneful follies of their sex. He indicated how they may derive positive benefit from men of letters, by sharing with them the domain of taste and cultivating the amenities of life. Many questions of vital import to their usefulness and satisfaction, previously kept in abeyance through false delicacy or proud indifference, were thus brought fairly into discussion, and submitted to the ordeal of truth; so that we may ascribe, in a measure, the increased consideration the sex enjoy, to this wise application of literature to life. We regard Steele as a kind of bold and graceful steward at the feast of letters; who, uniting intellectual gifts with social instincts,

won the thinker from retirement and the worldling to books, broke the ice of pedantry, melted the reserve of scholarship, and gently led the careless votary of pleasure into the temple of reflection. He was a pioneer in that great achievement of modern civilization—the diffusion of knowledge. He strove to make the acquisitions of the few available to the many; and first successfully established, among the Anglo-Saxons, and indirectly elsewhere, the magnetic telegraph of social literature—now the familiar blessing of the world—the cheapest of luxuries, the most unfailing of resources, and one of the mainsprings of human interest. Not so much by genius and erudition, but through a hearty frankness, a captivating address, and liberal sympathies, he became the favourite companion at every London breakfast-table; and lived in the world "rather as a spectator of mankind than as one of the species;" and to such advantage, that the list of subscribers to each of his periodicals comprised the most illustrious names in the kingdom. How natural for Lamb to exclaim, with the zest of a contemporary, "O, to read Steele *new!*" La Bruyère had analyzed character, and Castiglione drawn up a code of manners, but with a more genial and comprehensive aim, the Spectator and Tatler surveyed the whole field of human life, and reasoned of its inward elements and external phases, so that their projector deserved the encomium of one of his biographers, who says that "all the pulpit discourses of a year

scarce produced half the good that flowed from the Spectator of a day." In a purely literary point of view, Steele merits the distinction of having illustrated the availability of our vernacular. He took the language from stilts and placed it on its feet. The most felicitous of his essays are colloquial without any loss of dignity, and expressive without the use of any sonorous or peculiar words. He knew how to write like a gentleman as well as a scholar; reproduced original simplicity of diction, and from a ponderous mace that only the erudite thought of handling, moulded and tempered it into a delicate but keen rapier, light to carry and graceful to wield. Writing became more conversational, and talking more finished, from the easy rhetoric of the old essayists; and, although Steele modestly yields the palm to Addison, declaring himself "undone by his auxiliary;" we are inclined to think, with Swift, that "the ingenious gentleman who did, thrice a week divert and instruct the public with his papers, tried the force and compass of our language with eminent success." He had the nature and the independence to print talk, the sense to make it useful, and the fancy to give it a charm; and it has, therefore, been justly said of him and his co-labourers, that for more than half a century they "supplied the English nation with principles of speculation."

Con amore is the secret of eloquent advocacy. Steele loved truth and beauty in form, manners, and action, with an enthusiasm that few divines realized;

hence their exposition was to him a peculiar delight. He lacked the firmness to embody these high principles in his life; but the consciousness of this gave new fervour to the sentiments their contemplation inspired. He had the nobility to appreciate what he felt was beyond his reach; and seemed to atone for personal disloyalty to virtue, by sincere public homage at her shrine. The inconsistency might have been fatal, had he ministered openly at the altar whose secret priest he aspired to be; but addressing his readers under the humorous name of Isaac Bickerstaff, to which the wit of Swift had given the *prestige* of notoriety, there was no inevitable association of the censor with the man. An universality of aim took away the special intent of his hits at folly; and self-love was not wounded by the judicious advice of a kindly man of the world anonymously tendered. Besides and above all, there was the undertone of genuine affection, to render musical even the hoarse voice of reproof; the satire had too much of pleasantry to embitter its object; and the magnetic touch of that spirit of humanity which lives in the famous line of Terence, and the cherished song of Burns, took the sting of enduring pain from the needful blow of correction.

The Naturalist.

HUMBOLDT.

The unclouded and tranquil close of a long and successful career in art, literature, or science, is a phase of human life not less rare than grateful. Misfortune, error, or an unhappy organization, so often render the development of gifted men incomplete or morbid, that an exception to so common a lot deserves earnest attention. It shows that what are called the infirmities of genius are not inevitable; that there is a method of exercising the intellect without compromising health; and that moral integrity may co-exist with the boldest mental enterprise. Perhaps the most illustrious instance, in modern times, of an efficient and genial life of scientific research, is that of Alexander Von Humboldt. His observation is remarkable both for activity and scope. His study of the phenomena of the universe has been habitual; and in the eager pursuit of a special inquiry, he improved even the circumstances that baffled his progress. Thus, when delayed by political events from embarking on his American expedition, he occupied himself in ascertaining the height

of the central plain of Castile; when becalmed on soundings, he examined the weeds collected on the lead, to gain new light for a theory of the colouring of plants; the haze that, for many hours, concealed from his sight the Peak of Teneriffe, induced ingenious speculations on the effects of atmosphere on vision. Even amid the dreary expanse of the ocean, this observant spirit was constantly awake; now analyzing the gases in the air-vessel of a flying-fish, now tracing the source of the phosphorescent gleams that shine from the gambols of a porpoise, and now silently watching the effect of a new firmament on the sense of wonder in his own mind. A swallow that alights in the rigging, gives the hint for a treatise on the migration of birds; and when the shadows of night encompass the vessel, and clouds obscure the stars, the indefatigable inquirer lingers on his watch to note "the dip of the needle."

But his investigation of nature was as universal as it was constant; and it is to this quality we chiefly ascribe its great results. In certain departments of science others have accomplished more; but in the discovery of truths resulting from a combination of all, Humboldt is pre-eminent. His great distinction is the comprehensive view he takes of the laws and facts of the physical world. No naturalist ever so united minute observation with the ability to generalize. The smallest trait of material form or action did not evade his curious eye; and the grandest hypothesis could not subdue his intelligent soul.

Cuvier looked more extensively into comparative anatomy, Herschel mapped out more elaborately the chart of the heavens, Davy tried, with more subtle and various tests, the composition of air, and Linnæus more fully nomenclated the genera of plants; but over these and every other field of natural science, Humboldt wandered with enthusiasm. He represents in science the genuine eclectic. He intuitively recognised the unity of nature, and understood the relative worth of details far better than those who were satisfied with grasping them in an isolated way. He studied celestial phenomena with reference to the history, the processes, and the condition of the earth, the sea in its influence upon the land, and vegetation as connected with the air. He sought for great central truths, and estimated particular facts according as they led to these. Hence both the range and the minuteness of his observation. While arranging his instruments on the top of a lofty mountain, to calculate its altitude, inclination, and relation to other terrestrial masses, he chronicles the peculiarities of a little hairy bee that creeps across his hand. The "thick, cylindrical trunks, and delicate, lace-like foliage of the tree-ferns in the humid clefts of the Cordilleras," are described by him with the same zest as the "strife of the liquid element with the solid land." He records both the singular fact that insect-life exists in the tubular holes of the glacier, and the sublime one that the age of the hills may be ascertained by "the

character of the sedimentary strata they have uplifted." He collected crania from aboriginal sepulchres to aid the study of human physiology and races, as well as rare flowers to illustrate botanical science; he examined the vast superficies of a steppe in Asia, as well as calculated the distance to which the howling of a species of wild monkey can be heard; he watched the conflict between a horse and the electric eel, with the same careful interest as he scrutinized the traits of a fossil. The luxuriance of tropical vegetation, the roll of the Pacific waves, the direction of an aerolite, the flora and geology of Mexico and Siberia, volcanoes and cataracts, the influence of temperature, eclipses, tides, thunderstorms, earthquakes—all natural events and agencies, from the grandest to the most common, attracted his studious notice. His activity of mind in this respect has seldom been equalled; and if we follow his career from the time when he entered himself a pupil of Werner, in the mining school at Freyburg, at the age of twenty-one, to his eightieth birthday, which recently occurred, we find him undertaking the most formidable journeys to realize this rare capacity and intense thirst for observation. Blest with an excellent physical constitution, and an adequate estate, he early devoted himself to scientific research, not only with ardour, but with calm resolution; and, in pursuit of this object, exposed himself to all vicissitudes of climate, to the greatest privations, to years of toil and danger, with the most

cheerful hardihood. From his first essay on the Basalts of the Rhine to his Cosmos, we trace the results of experiment, the data of positive knowledge, the fruits of patient observation. Whether making the Continental tour in youth, giving his manhood to the exploration of the American Continent, or braving the frozen regions of Siberia in his old age, we find him always looking upon nature with the inquisitive, expectant, yet reverent eye of the philosopher, wearied with no minutiæ, overawed by no mystery, and baffled by no obstacle. If detained in a provincial town, he gathers the statistics of trade, population, and health. After a long day's excursion amid the solitudes of the desert, or in a radiant forest of the tropics, he devotes the evening to arranging for preservation the specimens he has gathered; and when the natural resources of a locality have been exhausted, he turns to the language of its inhabitants; and, by certain philological analogies, discovers their identity with some other and far distant race. The same assiduity which crowned the ornithological expeditions of Audubon with success, the same insight which enabled Franklin to trace the relations of electric phenomena, impelled and guided Humboldt throughout the realm of science. If Wordsworth has been justly regarded as the interpreter of the sentiment of nature, Humboldt may, with equal truth, be considered the interpreter of her laws. He looked upon the material universe as Shakespeare looked upon

human life, not with the partial glance of a selfish theorist, nor the careless one of an inconsiderate spectator, but with the large, sympathetic, keen, and rational vision of a man who would recognise eternal principles and universal laws, who would reunite the links of a vast chain and detect the wisdom concealed in such consummate power.

This intense habitude of observation, by means of which Humboldt gathered so many important natural facts, opened so many avenues to discovery, and afforded so many invaluable hints to the whole scientific fraternity, yielded him chiefly materials for induction and reference. He recorded them for the benefit of the world, in elaborate works descriptive of the countries he had explored as revealed by the light of science. But it would be unjust to his claims, were we to recognise him only as an industrious and bountiful purveyor in the realms of knowledge, like Sir Joseph Banks. The value of his researches is immeasurably enhanced by the reflective process to which he submitted them; and he excelled many of his brilliant cotemporaries in this regard, from the fact that his power of combination equalled, if it did not surpass, that of analysis. Heretofore the universe had been examined, as it were, piecemeal. One inquirer gave his life to geological examinations, another to botanical studies. Arago experimented on the polarization of light; Priestley made chemical discoveries; Buffon wrote a history of the animal kingdom; while Humboldt,

after observing the phenomena and arranging the facts of nature, sought, by meditation, to arrive at their mutual relations and absolute significance:

> "Truth would dimly beacon him
> From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
> O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble
> Into assured light in some branching mine."*

From the close of his juvenile education at Gottingen, his life seems to have been thus divided between observation and study:

> "One tyrant aim
> Absorbing all, fills up the interval—
> One vast, unbroken chain of thought kept up,
> Through a career or friendly or opposed
> To its existence; life, death, light, and shade,
> The shows of the world were bare receptacles,
> Or indices of truth, to be wrung thence."

His long residence in Paris, though ostensibly devoted to the publication of his voluminous works, was a period of unremitted examination of the most important contributions to science found in the libraries and cabinets, enlivened by personal intercourse and correspondence with the most illustrious men of the age. This alternate consultation of the records of scientific discovery and the actual phenomena of nature—this systematic gleaning of the elements of truth, and subsequent contemplation of

* Browning's Paracelsus.

their agency in physical history, led to the most important results. In the first place, it induced this earnest inquirer to recognise the limits of human knowledge, to avoid that fatal self-complacency which bars the access of new truth, and to annihilate the despotism of narrow prejudice. "Nature," he says, "presents itself to the human intellect as a problem which cannot be grasped, and whose solution is impossible, since it requires a knowledge of the combined action of all natural forces." But the peculiar advantage of the method of Humboldt, is that it gives scope and impulse to inquiry, by extending its horizon and regulating its pursuit according to a philosophical system. The riches of nature are inexhaustible, but they exist in wholly separate and independent forms; their production is realized by varied and mutual processes, and, like human life, they are subject to a common destiny. Hence Humboldt declares that "it is only by distributing phenomena into groups that we have been able, in the case of a few, to discover the empire of certain natural laws, grand and simple as nature herself." In this and similar inferences, we perceive the acute thinker. If the motive of this great apostle of natural science was a thirst for knowledge, and the means of his success unwearied observation, the instrument whereby that success was achieved and rendered beneficial to the world, was his ample reasoning—his causality, the breadth and clearness of his intellect. His mind could not

rest at a barren and isolated fact; he was not satisfied with ascertaining the proximate cause of a natural event, but arduously strove to reconcile details with general effects, to infer a law from apparent incongruities, and to establish the true bond of connection between numerous dissimilar, but mutually related phases of the Universe. In a word, Humboldt's great aim was to illustrate the philosophy of Nature. Thus he observes: "It is by subjecting isolated observations to the process of thought, and by combining and comparing them, that we are enabled to discover the relations existing in common between the climatic distribution and the individuality of organic forms." This comprehensive view and philosophical tone is characteristic of Humboldt. In this respect, he differs from the majority of writers on kindred subjects, whose books and lectures are almost wholly statistical, who seem to see everything through a single and narrow medium, and carry into science the exclusive and special aim which obtains in trade and mechanical pursuits. A progressive development of science was the creed of Humboldt; and he founded his anticipations of the future on his experience of the past, which indicates three reliable sources of new revelations: first, the effect of reason upon phenomena; second, events in the history of the world enlarging the sphere of observation, such as steam navigation; and third, the discovery of new means of perception, such as the telescope. His own example illustrates the vast

efficiency of the former—"investigating causes and their mutual connection," and uniting combination with analysis.

Perhaps the most striking instance of the enlargement and interest afforded a sphere of physical inquiry, by such broad and thoughtful interpretation, is that of Geography. Within the remembrance of us all, this was one of the most dry and technical branches of education—a mere epitome of names and boundaries. When Pinkerton added some general facts relative to the natural productions, climate, and population of countries; and Malte Brun shed a few rays of philosophy on the statistical details of the subject, they were hailed as a new and enterprising school of geographers. But to Humboldt and his cotemporaries belongs the honour of almost creating the science of physical geography, by revealing the individuality of the terrestrial masses, the disposition of their parts, their situation relatively to the rays of the sun, and the consequent effect of climate upon animal and vegetable life. They show that Europe is characterized by its islands and the great indentation of its shores, and is, therefore, the first of the civilizing continents, by affording such facilities for intercourse, and such an arena for events. Asia, on the contrary, they define as the continent of the germs, being only open at its margin to the ocean. Africa is closed to the ocean; and America lies between two great ones; hence the vastness of her destiny. Thus is revealed a plan

which governs the evolutions of history. So, too, in regard to climate; the tropical has the wealth of nature, and the temperate developes man; in the north is inquiry and Protestantism, and in the south superstition and Catholicism. In this manner, Humboldt connects the facts of science with humanity; he points out the intimate alliance between man and nature; and, accordingly, contemplates the *aspects* as well as the economy of the former, uniting the practical with the utilitarian view, and recognising the connection between the ideal and the material world, and the office of imagination as well as that of reason in the interpretation of her mysteries. The latter, he declares, "prompts and excites discoveries," and that, "besides the pleasure derived from acquired knowledge, there lurks in the mind of man, and tinged with a shade of sadness, an unsatisfactory longing for something beyond the present, a striving towards regions yet unknown and unopened."

Throughout his researches, Humboldt thus weds nature to humanity. He investigates history, literature, and political economy, as well as strata, nebulæ, and vegetation; and defines the relation of physical laws to human well-being. He unfolds the influence of the universe, not only upon vitality, but the soul of man; illustrating the effect of the skies of Greece in modifying the genius of that nation; of the sublimity of nature in exciting the devotion of the Hebrew Psalmist; of her picturesque beauty in

awakening the skill of the artist, as exhibited in the landscapes of Claude, Ruysdael, and Poussin; of her impressiveness and sentiment, as evolved by Shakespeare and Dante, Rousseau and Camoens. He pays a just tribute to the accuracy of the great poets in their delineation of her charms, and traces the degree and kind of appreciation of them manifested by different nations and eras; thus he notices the remarkable fact, that "no description has been transmitted to us from antiquity of the eternal snow of the Alps, reddened by the evening glow or the morning dawn, of the beauty of the blue ice of the glaciers, or of the sublimity of Swiss natural scenery, although statesmen and generals, with men of letters in their retinue, continually passed through Helvetia on their road to Gaul."

It is from such views of the relative agency of scientific truth upon human welfare and culture, that the recent association of her laws with moral, artistic, and religious discussions is derived. Thus one ingenious writer illustrates the omnipresence of Deity by the truths of astronomy, suggesting, by the rate at which light travels from the earth to the different stars, a microscope for time, whereby the succession of events is distinctly revealed at regular intervals. Another infers the law of retribution from the limitless undulations of the air making audible for ever our every word. We are assured, by a votary of the science of numbers, that "music and painting give us pleasure because its final ap-

peal is made to a mathematical organ; by La Place, that when all tokens of nations have perished, they have survived in the perfection of their astronomical observations; by a cultivator of acoustics, that the genius of great composers consists only in an intelligent grouping of etherial waves; by the geologist, that the Mosaic account of the creation harmonizes with the physical history of the earth; by the reflective moralist, that the serenity of virtue is as strictly derived from an immutable law as the principle of gravitation. An eloquent essayist traces the authentic forms of architecture to the shape of leaves, plants, and trees, and the polished stones of a beach. Agriculture is becoming a science in the light of chemical philosophy; an analogy is established between the scale of music and the colours of the prism, and many a gem of modern verse is poetry only because it records a beautiful scientific truth. The calmness of the geometrician, the brilliant combinations and analyses of the chemist, the grand deductions of the geographer, the sublime perceptions of the astronomer, instead of being mere facts of their individual consciousness, are now regarded as elements of universal truth intimately connected with the destiny, not only of nature, but the human race. The system of correspondence held by a growing sect, according to which the outward universe is only the material type of the spiritual world, indicates the same tendency. This reconciliation between the man of science, the lover

of nature, and the Christian, or rather the many evidences constantly afforded of a profound and inevitable sympathy between them, is one of the most hopeful signs of the times. It is rapidly bringing abstract truths into the sphere of positive demonstration, and elevating physical facts into the realm of spiritual significance. It is drawing into the sweetest union poetry and philosophy, proving, day by day, that "truth is stranger than fiction," and making vivid and conscious the relation between the seen and the unseen, the real and ideal, the beautiful and the true. In this auspicious and progressive regeneration of science, Humboldt has been a hardy and attractive pioneer, and amid the details of research and the precise statement of laws, has never failed to recognise in nature "a mysterious communion with the life of man."

It is but recently that the just relation of science to literature has been discovered; the one may be defined as the investigation of nature, and the other as the art of communicating truth; and thus viewed, it is obvious of what mutual service they are capable. Men of letters have been too much disposed to regard scientific inquirers as materialists, and the latter have retorted by assigning literary pursuits to the visionary. The facts of science afford the richest suggestions, both for illustration and argument, in every department of literature; while the graces of style, and the charms of rhetoric and poetry, like the downy wing attached to the seed, carry germs

of scientific truth far and wide, and implant them in a genial soil.

It has been more fortunate for the growth than the spread of the naturalist's acquirements, that his fraternity have so often been devoted to specialties, and for to a liberal mind there is no pedantry so repulsive as that of science. To one at all cognizant of the grandeur and mystery of nature, it is insupportable to listen to the complacent monologue of some explorer into the habits of shell-fish, or advocate of a theory of storms, who has selected from the arcana of the universe a single phenomenon or object for a hobby, whereon to nourish his narrow conceit, and wear out the patience of his acquaintance. It is for this want of broad interpretation, of noble enthusiasm, of reverent insight, that science has so long failed to commend itself as a means of universal culture. The literature of science has been chiefly written by men exclusively scientific, or inadequately versed in what they eloquently impart; the one sacrificing attractiveness to dry fact, and the other authenticity and completeness to elegance. St. Pierre, Goldsmith, Dr. Good, and other graceful compilers of natural history, however agreeable, are but superficial teachers. On the other hand, the authors of manuals, text-books, and treatises, in their anxiety to present rigid truth, appear to scorn the beauty with which she is so intimately allied. They give us formal books of statistics, instead of inspiring revelations.

Men of science have too often pursued their vocation in a material, prosaic, and narrow spirit; they have exercised the perceptive faculties and kept the sympathetic in abeyance; they have dreaded the least play of fancy or utterance of feeling, as if it would inevitably impugn their reliability and the dignity of their pursuit. In quite a different light are nature's wonders unfolded to us by Humboldt. He has the wisdom of the heart as well as of the head; he is quite aware that there are other avenues of truth besides the senses. He is equally alive to the poetry and the philosophy of the outward world. When the light on the last European shore fades before his gaze, he melts with the associations of home; in his retirement at Potsdam, when an aged man, he traces, with his indefatigable pen, reminiscences of scenery beheld in youth, with the enthusiasm of a poet, and follows, on a chart, the march of the American army in Mexico, explored by him years before, and indulges in the noblest anticipations for the ultimate progress of that degraded land, through the colonization of a more enlightened and vigorous race.

"The sight of a fan palm," he says, "in an old tower of the botanical garden at Berlin, implanted in my mind an irresistible desire to undertake distant travels." It is this rare blending of calm observation and ardent feeling, which gives their unrivalled charm to the writings of Humboldt. He is not only the devoted explorer, but the eloquent

expositor of nature. It was his conviction that "the imagination of the poet exists in the discoverer as well as in every other form of human greatness;" and he sought contact with the life and laws of the universe through instinct as well as intelligence. Not only as a field of knowledge, but of sensation and of sentiment, Humboldt gave himself up to the love and study of nature. He sought not to wrest every object and element into the support of an exclusive theory; he neither repudiated the legacy of past acquirements, nor yielded them all implicit faith: he confined not his gaze to one vista, but looked abroad with a receptive mind, conscious of imperfect abilities, yet loyal to reason, and inspired with the faith that "better than the seen lies hid." In such an attitude, new glimpses were afforded him; he welcomed light from whatever source, and gratefully accepted all occasions to extend the domain of knowledge. The history of science is the best evidence that such is the legitimate means of advancing her empire:

"'Tis in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their expectations,
Eventually to follow—as the sea
Waits ages in its bed, till some one wave
Out of the multitude aspires, extends
The empire of the whole, some feet, perhaps,
Over the strip of sand, which could confine
Its fellows so long time; thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained."

By gradual contributions of discovery, by happy suggestions, and, most of all, by a catholic temper and a sublime patience, have her trophies been won. Before Newton instinctively seized upon the law of gravitation, Copernicus had determined the general movements of the heavenly bodies, Kepler had demonstrated that they moved in elliptical orbits, and Galileo had revealed an entire system of secondary planets. Chemistry has become properly a science only in recent times. By what regular gradations has it gone on to demonstrate that change is the life of nature; that "the tear of despair shed to-day shall appear to-morrow as the rainbow of hope;" and that the atmosphere is "the cradle of vegetable and the coffin of animal life." How many years elapsed between the hour that Franklin drew down the lightning with his kite, and that on which Morse set at work the first electric telegraph! In every department of human knowledge the same gradual development of truth occurs, and by the same elaborate process of observation and subsequent patient exercise of thought. We are often deceived by the apparent suddenness of a discovery; and the life and labours of Humboldt teach a noble lesson to those who imagine that there is any blind necessity or caprice of fortune in the realization of truth. Her acknowledged votaries all undergo their pilgrimage, penance, and meditative seclusion, before the veil is lifted from the promised land.

It is not unusual, in the annals of literature and

science, to behold a venerable author revising his works, adding some final evidence to the support of a cherished system, or toiling to gain one more laurel for his wreath of fame. Bentham, who furnished the parliamentary reform orators with their best arguments, continued to the last to elaborate his favourite doctrine. The speculative tendency of Berkeley, after exhausting his ingenuity in the defence of the immaterialism of the world, found vent, in his old age, in attempting to prove that tar-water is a universal specific. It is rare, however, to see the consistent and enthusiastic devotee of general science, after an arduous life of pilgrimage and study, crowned with honour, tolerant, urbane, and content in spirit, unimpaired in mental or physical vigour, calmly survey the immense field over which he has passed, converge his varied observations, and, subjecting them to the process of rigid induction, give the harmonious and complete result. Such an achievement is the Cosmos of Humboldt. He may be imagined as having prayed, at the conception of this enterprise, in the language of an ancient sage—

> "Give me but one hour of my first energy,
> Of that invincible faith, one only hour,
> That I may cover with an eagle glance
> The truths I have, and spy some certain way
> To mould them, and completing them, possess!"

Philanthropic impulse, as well as scientific enthusiasm, prompted and sustained the unwearied labours

of Humboldt. He is not less communicative than inquisitive, and by associating his information with scenic descriptions, incidents of travel, and the natural expression of sentiment, he endeavoured to render physical facts intelligible and familiar. His knowledge of the world and goodness of heart, kept him from all selfish pride of attainment. He toiled not less constantly to diffuse than to acquire, compared results with other observers, and, in his last work, suggests the use of authentic panoramas of different countries, with able lecturers to illustrate them, as an important aid to popular education. Few men of science have realized such positive utility in their studies. We find him quoted by writers in every department; and it has been justly observed, that no journey was ever undertaken with such complete intellectual preparation, as his excursion to Siberia. Throughout his long life, whether exploring uncivilized continents, or absorbed in Parisian libraries and learned reunions, whether gleaning materials for his cabinet, revising his written labours; alone in the desert, or the honoured functionary of a court, he is, at once, the seeker and almoner of knowledge, quietly, yet earnestly, pursuing a beneficent aim with healthful zeal and calm intelligence. Such a career lends interest and dignity to an epoch in which the majority of gifted and active minds sought only the perishable trophies of military conquest. What a period in the history of the world is that which includes the life of Humboldt,

and how serenely noble rises his venerable image above the mob of vulgar heroes whose renown is associated with no lasting benefit to mankind! Humboldt saw Frederick the Great. Within the circle of his days occurred the French and American Revolutions, the rise and fall of Napoleon, and the late European political agitations. His course was often stayed by a blockade; he sometimes made his way through armies and privateers, intrigues and battles; but, with his mind fixed on the sublimities of the Universe, his ambition directed only towards useful discoveries, his faith anchored on eternal laws,—the roar of battle, the march of invaders, and the change of the world's masters, only affected him as so many interruptions to his pilgrimage, or as events whereby to measure that progress of humanity to which his belief and sympathies fervently clung. He has been called the Napoleon of science,—a title not less expressive than true; but the victories he achieved are bloodless, the trophies he won perennial, the energy he exercised creative. Like the modern conqueror, he scaled almost inaccessible heights, but it was to discover there grand and beneficent truths, not to convey the elements of human destruction; like him, he braved Russian snows, but it was to investigate the latent processes of the universe, not to sacrifice thousands to personal ambition; and like him, he strove to extend and fortify an empire, but it was the empire of knowledge and humanity, not of ignorance and tyranny. Born the same year with his warlike pro-

totype, he has lived to see his influence superseded, and to confirm the deduction of science, that all "radical causation" is to be found only in the everlasting laws of nature and principles of truth, and that human well-being consists in the intelligent recognition and cheerful obedience of these primal decrees.

The Correspondent.

MADAME DE SEVIGNÉ.

ONE of the most intimate and oldest friends of Madame de Sevigné, remarkable no less for excellent judgment than religious sincerity, tells her, in a letter, "*Votre âme est grande, noble, propre à dispenser des trésors et incapable de s'abaisser au soin d'en amasser.*" M. de Grignan, her son-in-law, writes, after her death, "Ce n'est pas seulement une belle-mère que je regrette; *c'est une amie aimable et solide, une société délicieuse;*" and his wife declared, in her bitter grief, "*je n'ai pas la force de lever les yeux assez haut pour trouver le bien d'on doit venir le secours.*" These expressions, fresh from living hearts, are worth pages of analysis in unveiling the secret of her epistolary success. Too noble to hoard up an idea, a feeling, or a grace that could give pleasure to another;—a kind of *spirituelle* Lady Bountiful, whose society, even to those most familiar with it, was pronounced delicious; and the object of an affection that gave birth to such profound regret—do we not at once see that it was the

generous instinct of her heart that bore along with its free tide the musical current of words, the playful bubbles of wit, and the alternating undulations of sense and sensibility?

The spirit of love which "casteth out fear," made her pen frank and bold; the desire to make another participate in all she enjoyed, gave a life-like vivacity to her narrative, whether describing a royal interview, the effect of the announcement of Mademoiselle d'Orleans' proposed marriage, a fashionable scene, a country landscape, or a French cook's suicide from wounded *amour-propre*. She excites our sympathies by her confidence; and we share her amusement at court, her relish of literary society, her anxiety on account of her son's devotion to Ninon, and the sublime resignation of her dying hour, as we should those of a truly estimable and lovely woman personally known and cherished. It may be, as some critics have asserted, that the idiomatic purity of her style is not immaculate; and it is true that quite an unequal interest attaches to the numerous letters ascribed to her; it may be, also, that the recondite felicities of unstudied yet perfect art some of them display, cannot be fully appreciated by any but those "to the manner born," and that the *esprit*, for which we have no English synonym, is the great charm of her letter-writing;—yet its frankness, vivacity, and *naïveté*, its piquant, easy, and varied grace, if they do not originate in, at least owe their felicitous combination to essential

traits of womanly character; and it is as a genuine literary development of these, that the letters of Madame de Sevigné are permanently interesting.

Letters unendeared by personal affection are acceptable to public taste in proportion as they catch the spirit and embody the attractions of good society. Tact, vivacity, and agreeability, are as essential to the one as the other; and great earnestness equally incompatible with both. Hence the rarity of excellence in this department of literature; such a blending of nature and cultivation as constitutes the epistolary art, being quite as uncommon as the same thing in a companion. The very nature of a letter is egotistical; it is literally printed talk—a communication such as we should utter orally, if the person addressed were by. Accordingly, the transfer of a letter from domestic and social life to literature, is always a hazardous experiment. They are either too unreserved to be read by a third party without indelicacy, too strictly private to interest the world, or so sacred in their revelations and tone that the glance of a careless eye would be profanation. On the other hand, stripped of all individuality of feeling, devoted wholly to generalizations, conveying no echo from the heart and animation from the real life of the writer, published letters are vapid. It is from these intrinsic difficulties that a collection of letters seldom answers any other purpose than that of reference for the facts and opinions appertaining to celebrated men.

The eloquence of indifference, as Hazlitt calls wit, is an uncommon gift, and it is the charm of all renowned letter-writers. A favourable social position, to afford materials of general interest, and give the habit of spirited and pleasing expression, fine powers of observation, and that kind of sympathetic curiosity that loves to note and communicate what the panorama of life reveals, are quite as needful to a good correspondent. These advantages were possessed, in an eminent degree, by Horace Walpole. His ruling passions were anecdote and *vertú;* had they been either more human or more spiritual, he would have been more noble and interesting as a writer, and more loveable as a man, but far less successful as a correspondent. If we open any one of the many volumes of letters from his pen, we find some familiar allusion to a renowned character, that brings it nearer to us than any history or memoirs, however circumstantial; an amusing bit of court gossip, which yields an instant glimpse into the whole comedy of life; or a graceful compliment, that, artificial as it is, for the moment, gratifies our taste, as would a mosaic or a miniature in the author's cabinet.

The lofty and exquisite creations of literature, which captivate the reason and enlist the heart, are not always wholesome; and as the gravest statesman is better for an occasional tea-table chat, the enthusiast and the student find in the elegant trifling of such letters an unexciting table-land in the field of

literature, whereon to enjoy the requisite luxury of social pastime. Letters thus conceived are an epitome of external life—not in its philosophy or its sentiment, but in its scenic phases. Such an exhibition to an imaginative reader becomes dramatic; and often yields the historian and novelist invaluable suggestions. The sixty years thus chronicled by Walpole, are made known to us, so to speak, in their atmospheric character; what was evanescent, yet of peculiar significance when viewed in relation to the grave aspects of the period, is thus caught and preserved. How otherwise should we have known definitely of the style of a Vauxhall party, the particular claims of the celebrated beauties, the table-talk of the traditional wits?—what people said of "She Stoops to Conquer," the day after it was brought out,—how each successive volume of Tristram Shandy was received,—the zest of a fresh joke by Garrick, and the costume of Lady Wortley at Florence? Pitt's oratory and Gray's fastidiousness we can easily discover in their literary remains; but an instance or two of the former's covetous disposition, and the fact that the latter sat apart and eat ices at a Roman ball, incidentally recorded in a letter, bring their proper humanity distinctly before us. So a more vivid reality attaches in the mind to the horrors of the Lisbon earthquake, and the early achievements of Clive, when the original impression they produced reappear in a familiar epistle of the day. It is the same with the mention of Lady

Coventry's vanity and Churchill's death, Voltaire's new poem and the current talk about the American war. Only writers with an uncommon stock of impudence can address the public without a certain respect, that leads them to suppress details and qualify expressions. The letter-writer, in the easy, frank, lively manner of a pleasant colloquy, narrates what he sees and hears. From him we derive what we seek in society without the trouble of going there. The intrigues, political and amorous, the state-trials, the battles, suicides, elopements, rumoured marriages, doings of belles and beaux, court gossip, and literary animosities, recorded by Walpole, reflect the same busy, discontented, changing world as that around us now, only modified by conventional peculiarities; and he does this well, because he is neither serious nor enthusiastic, because he has no private feeling sufficiently ardent either to blind his eyes with tears or deaden observation by the intensity of consciousness; because he looks on without having his sympathies so much enlisted as to divert attention from the passing drama; and because his mind was of so desultory a kind, that concentration was painful and variety necessary to him. Hence there is no deep emotion, no profound insight, no thrilling surmise in the view of life unfolded. All is fresh, vivacious, and familiar; and we feel, as we read, that it is the absence of great qualities, and the felicitous balance of ordinary ones, that render the agreeable a predo-

minant trait of character; and this it is which is the characteristic attraction of all popular letters.

The direct, unequivocal, and familiar style of epistolary address, renders letters a most available form of authorship when it is intended to unfold a special theme. Two of the most remarkable controversial books in existence are thus written—Junius, and the Provincial Letters of Pascal. Landor availed himself of the same method to picture a classic era, and some of his best "imaginary conversations," occur in the supposed correspondence of Pericles and Aspasia. Southey, in Espriella's Letters, gives, with admirable skill, a Spaniard's impressions of England; and, in a similar way, many works of modern travel have successfully appeared. Foscolo, in his "Ultime Lettere d'Jacopo Ortis," gave expression to his sentiment and political faith in language so tersely eloquent, that the volume has become a standard example of Italian prose; and novelists, from time to time, make efficient use of the same favourite medium, to trace out the intricacies of a plot, and indicate the fluctuations of impassioned feeling. More or less of art, however, necessarily modifies the development of this most natural of all forms of writing, when from a private it becomes a public channel of expression. Too much study in the phrases, an absence of playful candour, and often something formal in the tone, rob it of that air of confidence and *abandon* which is the secret charm of a genuine letter.

"An interesting book," says Hartley Coleridge, "might be written on the mighty events that have been determined by the delay or miscarriage of letters." It is highly probable that some of the most popular books have grown out of letters, wherein a scope of fancy and individuality of thought have found attractive utterance, that a more formal expression would have thwarted. One of the most solid results of the kind may be found in the celebrated Essays of John Foster, weighty with thought and vigorous in argument, yet originating, as his biographer assures us, in the conversation and correspondence of friendship. Carlyle's Cromwell, Lockhart's Scott, Jortin's Erasmus, and Middleton's Cicero, are almost entirely made up of judiciously compiled letters. In our own literature, that graphic and amusing picture of life in the West, entitled a New Home, was suggested in the same manner. The most pleasing memorial of Wirt's genius is found in the "Letters of the British Spy," and the best of American classic romances is acknowledged to be the "Letters from Palmyra;" while "Letters from Under a Bridge" contain numerous highly-finished and picturesque descriptive sketches, and dainty bits of colouring most agreeably mingled.

Napoleon is said to have charged Madame de Staël with having a vagabond imagination; perhaps the capricious wandering of that faculty is the prerogative of genius; and certain it is, that a vagabond observation, that has an eye for every curious

phase of character, and all the phenomena of social life, and keeps roaming in search of the grotesque, the novel, and the significant, is one of the great requisites of a letter-writer whose epistles have any permanent attraction. The materials thus gleaned may revolve about incidents quite domestic, but they must form the staple of the argument. A good letter for general perusal is a catalogue *raisonnée* of fashion, politics, and literature artfully combined; it must be well sprinkled with *on dits;* the opera, or the races, the most fresh philosophical speculation, the turns of the wheel of fortune, the latest lion, death, play, book, engagement, speech, assembly, and bon-mot must be duly chronicled; with just enough sprightliness to make the record vital, just enough sensible commentary to give it impressiveness, and just enough sentiment to add a pleasing light and shade to the sketch. Piquant secrets and public affairs should be equally mingled. The diamonds in a lady's hair, and the gems of rhetoric in a minister's speech, a note on the weather, and a description of a mood, a hint of practical wisdom and a dash of winsome humour, should alternate in the letter, as they do in the talk of intelligent, genial, and communicative people.

The inability thus to express one's self with the pen from the self-distrust inspired by the sight of a blank sheet of paper, is the cause of the wonderful discrepancy between the letters and conversation of many individuals. Yet there is no revelation of the

spirit of an age like that afforded by the unstudied and frank letters of friends who have lived in the midst of society and affairs, without being too much involved in them. Events deemed by biographers and historians too trivial for record, there find a memorial; and personages who, in other books, move before us with the stately reserve of a theatrical pageant, become almost boon companions. In a volume* recently published, the life of the French metropolis just before the last revolution, is thus aptly mirrored. From the advent of a *mouchoir de caprice* to the result of a scientific experiment, from the gay assembly at the opera to the grave sessions of the Academy, from a critical estimate of Balzac or Rossini to an account of the ravages of *la grippe*, we are carried with something of the bewildering transition that life itself yields to the sensitive recipient of its Parisian excitements. It is this alternation of subject and half-in-earnest manner, this fluent, easy, and colloquial sportiveness—this telling everything and attaching importance to nothing, in which consists the genius of this kind of literature.

Apart from their direct utility, letters are chiefly interesting as exponents of character. In this view, the correspondence of literary men is highly suggestive. In England, it is customary to publish the papers of distinguished generals and statesmen; and the biographers of poets wisely connect the narrative of their usually uneventful lives, with letters

* Lettres Parisiennes, par Madame Emilié de Girardin.

chronologically arranged. The vanity and worldliness of Pope, the artificial cleverness of his muse, and the never-lapsing over-consciousness which marked his existence, are plainly evident in his letters; while those of Cowper, overflowing with gentleness and modesty, reveal, by their affectionate sportiveness, the attempt to beguile himself of "the thing he was," and thus ward off the morbid state of mind to which he was liable. Byron's inconsistent directions to Murray, his reckless avowal of opinions wholly at variance with the enthusiasm that inspired him, the constant alternation of generous sentiment, wayward fancies, and perverse judgments, let us into the tumult, caprice, and fervour of his mind more readily, and, not infrequently, altogether as effectively as his poems. The mood enveloping the fact, now flippant and now serious, the professed contempt for fame and the evident care of reputation, apparent indifference and real deference to public opinion, the longing for content and the assertion of independence, assure the most thoughtless reader of a pitiable state of self-dissatisfaction, growing out of the want of harmony between an aspiring soul and unsustained integrity of life. Franklin's homely sense and prudential ideal, are singularly manifest in his familiar epistles; and Lord Chesterfield's directions to his son, as preserved in his correspondence, evince how completely external accomplishments and polite learning embodied his standard of a gentleman's education. Pedantry, as an attribute of character,

has wearied many a fresh heart in the letters of Pliny; and the intelligent kindliness of Ganganelli is finely developed in the same way. "Upon this subject of letters," writes Montaigne, "I will add that it is a kind of writing wherein my friends think I can do something; and, I am willing to confess, I should rather have chosen to publish my whimsies that way than any other, had I any to whom to write." The wit, knowledge of the world, masculine grasp of the material, and womanly insight into conventionalities; the coarseness, talkative and spirited disposition, occasional benevolent impulse, and lively conversational powers of Lady Montagu, as displayed in her letters, are as indicative of her character as the quarrels, repartees, and indelicate bearing recorded of her by cotemporaries. Scott's letters are as manly and kind as was his behaviour; Shelley's as noble and philanthropic as his faith. It is well known that Lamb's quaint humour first exhibited itself in letters; not a few are equal to his essays, and, in some instances, were their origin and basis. It is remarkably characteristic of Washington, that his letters exhibit a gradual improvement, not only in verbal aptness, realized by the constant substitution of words more definite than those first adopted, but also in orthography and general correctness of diction. The terseness of masterly despatches is the acknowledged trait of brave commanders; of which there are signal examples among our own chiefs; and Webster's official correspondence, lately pub-

lished, is as impressive, though a less eloquent proof of a clear, far-reaching, and forcible intellect, as his orations. To an analytical reader, the difference in the characters of Goethe and Schiller is most expressively indicated in their correspondence. We perceive that the former exacts tribute from every field of human experience as the material of his creations, while the latter earnestly strives to reach an ideal of intellectual and moral grandeur; there is universality in the spirit of the one, and concentration and an uncompromising idealism in that of the other; the one appears in his letters a gifted egotist, the other a noble friend; their respective inquiries, criticisms, suggestions, and plans, as there unfolded, utter the same voice as the more artistic writings of each, and proclaim Goethe many-sided and reserved, and Schiller exalted and self-denying. The sentimentalism of Metastasio, the practical intelligence of Swift, and the scholarlike refinement of Gray, are conspicuous in their letters. It is quite appropriate that among the very earliest published writings of Voltaire, should be a dozen epistles in a collection of *Lettres Galantes;* and I have seen an autograph letter of Burns, written to accompany a present of game, which, though hastily scribbled, contained vivid traces of his love of nature, his tenderness, his manly pride, and his zest for pleasure; written, too, as the chirography and his own confession at the end prove, when he was in a convivial state.

Love-letters are proverbially insipid and devoid of interest except to the parties immediately concerned. Those of Steele are an exception. One of his critics has observed of him and Fielding, that they seemed so made for happiness, that it is a pity they were not immortal on earth. In Steele's letters we find this peculiar relish of life yet keen; we read his amatory epistles with pleasure, because they indicate such a natural enjoyment of the affections. There is no sentimentality or undue extravagance, no over-refinements or weak self-distrust, but an earnest, manly, and rational love, uttering itself with the ardour and frankness of a warm and honest heart; and, at the same time, with good sense and a noble spirit. Nothing, indeed, can be more characteristic of Steele's impulsive and generous nature, precarious fortunes, and improvident habits, than these off-hand letters, written often in the heat of the moment, and always with the careless freedom of a brave lover and man of wit. The very dates are significant of the vicissitudes of his career; ranging from Bloomsbury Square to a sponging house; now bearing the equivocal locality of "solitude," and now the convivial one of "Will's." The fond epithets, sweet counsels, and appreciative remarks in these *billet-doux* are never mawkish. Those written after his marriage bring us singularly near; especially where he writes his wife that he is about to dine with Addison, and cannot see her until night; that he is seeking for a place just vacant at court, and must lunch in the

city; bids her, one day, send some clean linen, and another, call for him in a coach; and adds, "put my best wig and new shoes in the box, that I may be dressed well to enjoy a conference with so sweet a person." The same familiarity is induced by his affectionate directions to "take care and wrap yourself very warm to-morrow;" and to "be cheerful and beautiful;" and after what he calls their "little heats," to receive him good-humouredly. From his watch by the body of the Prince of Wales, from Lord Sunderland's office, from St. James's, or the Gentleman's Coffee-house, from the country-seat he is visiting, and the desk where he is penning a Spectator, these loving missives were habitually sent; many of them, perhaps worthless in utilitarian eyes, have been preserved; and they convey the most authentic and fresh impression of Sir Richard's disposition and habits, and form an essential means of estimating his character. Of English letter-writers, we doubt if any excel him in frankness and geniality. All of the man desirable to know, might be readily inferred from his letters—his intelligence, generosity, lapses from right, affection, piety, want of system, magnanimity, and *bonhommie*. "I am very sick," he says, in one instance, "with too much wine last night;" and in another, "I have broke my rest, because I knew you would be such a fool as not to sleep;" and again, "I am going, this morning, to a most solemn work—to invoke the Almighty's blessing on you and the little ones." "Send me a book

which is upon the escritoire, in the dining-room, many leaves of it turned down and paper in it." In answer to his wife's remonstrances, he calls her his "dun," and his "dear, little, peevish, wise governess;" and asks her, "How can you let your spirits sink so as to mind what people say whom you do not esteem?" His literary propensities are occasionally revealed; thus he says, "I was last night so enamoured of an author I was reading, and some thoughts which I put together on that occasion, that I was up till morning, which makes me a little restive to-day." Such casual insight into daily life, posterity can only learn through letters; and when they are natural, we seem almost to hear the voices of the departed. In more elaborate letters, Steele exhibits the sweet and noble feelings of his heart with grave beauty. Thus he writes to Prue:—

"You are as beautiful, as witty, as prudent, and as good-humoured as any woman breathing; but, I must confess to you, I regard all these excellences as you will please to direct them for my happiness or misery. With me, madam, the only lasting motive to love is the hope of its being mutual."

"I am now under your own roof while I write; and that imaginary satisfaction of being so near you, though not in your presence, has in it something that touches me with such tender ideas, that it is impossible for me to describe their force. All great passions make us dumb."

"You cannot imagine the gratitude with which I

meditate on your obliging behaviour to me, and how much improved in generous sentiments I return from your company."

"The union of minds in pure affection is renewing the first state of man. Beauty, my fairest creature, palls in the possession; but I love also your mind; your soul is dear to me as my own; and if the advantage of a liberal education, and as much contempt of the world, joined with endeavours towards a life of strict virtue and religion, can qualify me to raise new ideas in a breast so well disposed as yours is, our days will pass away with joy, and instead of introducing melancholy prospects of decay, give us hope of eternal youth in a better life."

"My books are blank paper, and my friends intruders."

"Love animates my heart, sweetens my humour, enlarges my soul, and affects every action of my life."

"To pass my evenings in so sweet a conversation, and have the esteem of a woman of your merit, has in it a particularity of happiness no more to be expressed than returned."

"Let us go on, to make our regards to each other mutual and unchangeable, that, while the world around us is enchanted with the false satisfactions of vagrant desires, our persons may be shrines to each other, and sacred to conjugal faith, unreserved confidence, and heavenly society."

Certain forms of literature have what may be

termed an indigenous interest, that is, they attract from their essential relation to the country of their birth, precisely as fruits and flowers peculiar to a special latitude are identified with the region of their nativity; thus, independent of its graceful altitude, we love the palm-tree as the symbol of oriental landscape, the elm as an American, the oak as an English, and the cocoa-nut as a tropical product. We recognise a charm in what is native not only in character and physical resources, but in literature; and although invention and perseverance may naturalize every form of writing and art, yet those always retain an exotic aspect which are not the spontaneous and appropriate offspring of national life. We see this in the comparative excellence or fecundity of the various types of intellectual development, in the different countries of the world. The lyrical drama seems artificial out of Italy; the phases of human sentiment, in its introspective refinements, find natural expression chiefly among the Germans; the best specimens of the domestic novel and the didactic poem, have been created by English genius; while school-books and newspapers typify the busy, civic, and educational existence of the United States. It is doubtless true that the delicate significance of literary masterpieces is seldom realized in a foreign language; but an intelligent mind, when possessed of the vocabulary of a nation, is certainly adequate to comprehend and appreciate the spirit of its literature; and such a one will scarcely

fail to distinguish between what is adapted to the language and genius of a people, and what is grafted from abroad upon the parent stock. Few English readers can possibly relish Racine or Corneille as dramatists, or find any poetic impressions in the flow of French verse; but in their comedies, memoirs, scientific treatises, and letters, none can hesitate to acknowledge a natural superiority. This is easily accounted for by the fact that, in France, society is the main-spring, the atmosphere, the vital principle of mental activity and national taste. Marmontel says the genius of a language is embodied in society; and this is emphatically true of the French; and hence it follows that the most authentic revelations of their literature must be sought in the least formal and most social kinds of writing, such as familiar biographies and epistles. The letters of Madame de Sevigné have become classic. Perhaps in no other country would it be possible for a species of literature so accidental and superficial to attain such a rank. Yet these letters are as legitimately an exponent of the French mind, in its characteristic phase, as are the plays of Shakespeare of the English, the songs of Burns of the Scotch, or the epics of Tasso and Ariosto of the Italian.

Doubtless the celebrity of Madame de Sevigné's letters is, in part, to be referred to the era and the society they illustrate, and the influence of the latter upon her powers of expression. Habitual intercourse with such people as Rochefoucald, Madame de la

Fayette, and all the wits, heroes, and statesmen of Louis XIV., naturally trained to rare excellence her colloquial ability, and, at the same time, accustomed her to rapid and keen reflection. With men so identified with the public interests of the kingdom as Fouque, Colbert, the Prince de Conde, and Cardinal Retz, for frequent companions, her views were unavoidably quickened and enlarged; while the ladies of that gay and profligate court, afforded exhaustless materials for daily gossip. Yet it would be unjust to her real merit not to ascribe the permanent fame of her letters to intrinsic qualities of mind and heart. It is these, indeed, which prevent the domestic affairs and strictly personal details which often form the entire subject of an epistle, from being wearisome. Whether she extols the resignation of her dying aunt, harps upon some unimportant incident connected with the Coulange family, describes the monotony of provincial or the variety of metropolitan life, Madame de Brissac's colic, and Mademoiselle Louvois's nuptials, or announces a choice bit of news with elaborate zest, there is a certain *esprit*, a naturalness and purity of style, and an affable brilliancy in her letters, the secret of which lies at the very basis of character.

It is therefore useless to propose Madame de Sevigné as an epistolary model to be carefully imitated. Nothing is more characteristic of her pen than in its spontaneity: she declares that she jots down *tout ce que trouve au bout de la plume;* and that when she

commences, she knows not if the letter will be long or short. It must ever be remembered, if we would learn the origin of her facility, that she wrote with no consciousness of the public or of fame. To divert one whom she loved, and from whom she was separated, and to keep alive, by communion of thought and feeling, the habitual as well as the instinctive sentiment that united them, was her single object. For this she looked with interest on the drama of life, treasured the clever sayings of the *conversazione*, watched her own impressions, and afterwards gathered them with the fresh hand of affection, to scatter lovingly in her daughter's pathway.

The inspiration of her letters was maternal love. Hence she strove to elicit from La Fontaine, Molière, or Racine, ideas that would gratify Madame de Grignan's philosophical taste; recorded the minute events of her daily life, her vigils by the sick-couch, her interviews with mutual friends, the little nothings of the fashionable world, and the fore-shadowings of national changes; hence, too, she insinuated gentle counsel, indulged in speculation, and breathed, in graceful and sweet language, the longings, aspirations, and comfort derived from the ruling sentiment of her heart. Well may she exclaim, to this idolized child, "*Je voudrois bien que mon cœur fût pour Dieu comme il est pour vous!*"

But warmth and constancy of feeling does not explain the charm of Madame de Sevigné's letters; it only accounts for their voluminous details and genial

spirit. Her active intelligence and integrity of character gave them sprightliness and vigour. That her mental resources were rare, may be inferred from the cheerful occupation of her time when in the provinces, where a promenade, books, occasional directions to the farmers, and writing letters, was all her life afforded in exchange for the social attractions of Paris. In this capacity to retire from the most gifted of society of the day, and find content in solitude, she resembled her English prototype. Lady Montagu used to be glad of an occasional illness to escape company; and long resided in a lonely palace in the Venetian territory, where she received the few visiters who sought out her retreat, in a domino;—enacting Lady Hester Stanhope on a small scale.

Principle and good sense also underlie Madame de Sevigné's winning vivacity of manner, as pearls and coral rest beneath the sparkle of the playful waves. Her biographers hint rather than explain her early domestic history; but it requires little acumen to infer from the few circumstances revealed, combined with what her letters assure us were her prominent traits, that she resolved, after one venture in love, to keep the passions in abeyance, to live for her children, and maintain a systematic, tranquil, and benevolent existence. That she succeeded in so doing, amid the temptations of such an age and associations, evinces an independent rectitude which accounts for the peculiar esteem with which she

inspired, not only cotemporaries, but her countless readers of succeeding time. "*Il falloit,*" she writes, "*un liberté douce, une vie tranquille, une esprit calm;*" and it was this fixed destiny that enabled her to look abroad so peacefully and note, with such an air of enjoyable observation, the passing events of the hour. It made her attitude contemplative, and kept from her letters those extremes of rapture and despair, which is a principal cause of the universal pleasure they yield.

The self-imposed isolation of Madame de Sevigné, adopted in order to gratify her sense of right and the claims of her family, caused the affection she did indulge to become intense, and even romantic. It partook of the character both of a sentiment and a passion; and although its object does not appear fully to have recognised the devotedness and self-sacrifice of which she was the occasion, we are inclined to think that the fervour of this love is one of the great though least recognised charms of these letters. It is certainly that which distinguishes them from those of Lady Montagu and Walpole; for the former, independent of her talent, is chiefly remembered for having introduced inoculation for the small-pox into England, quarreled with Pope, and been equally notorious for satire and slovenliness; while Madame de Sevigné's character as a mother, a friend, and a lady, was as pre-eminent during her life, as her epistolary genius is at this day. A large part of her estate, many of her social advantages,

and finally, her life, were given up to the absorbing interest for her child. "*Non seulement,*" she writes, "*je lis vos lettres avec plaisir, ma je les relis, avec une tendresse qui m'occupe et qui me fait aimer mes promenades solitaires.*" Such maternal emotion finding utterance, here and there, amid descriptions of court frivolities and social incidents, imparts that glow of the heart, without which her letters would have been only brilliant. Like all genuine love, too, it seems to awaken for the world itself a charity which blunts the edge of ridicule, and, under the liveliest sarcasm, keeps fresh a thorough amiability of disposition. This is what has occasioned Madame de Sevigné to be regarded with a warmer sympathy than her two English rivals ever can inspire—Walpole, because he is in earnest about nothing; and Lady Mary, because she is severe without being, at the same time, genial. The latter expressed a confident opinion that, in forty years after her death, her letters would be as interesting as those of her French precursor; but, besides being deficient in the balm of an immortal sentiment—one of the greatest of conservative principles, not only in life, but in literature—their main attraction lies in descriptive talent, and that chiefly employed on Oriental scenes—then a novel theme, but since rendered familiar by a score of able works, from Anastasius to Eothen.

But it is to the indirect rather than the positive effect of this attachment, that we are disposed to refer much of the rare literary excellence of Madame

de Sevigné. The paucity of interesting correspondents is not so much owing to the fact that epistolary talent is rare, as to the still more usual fact that the entire confidence and receptive ability, which alone can be successfully addressed, is wanting. Some one has acutely said that, if we would judge of a man's real character, we should inspect not the letters he writes, but those he receives—in other words, discover the sentiments he inspires in others, not those he professes himself. To estimate the difficulty we would suggest, let us recall the state of mind induced by the mere act of writing a letter. Does not the image of him or her to whom we are about to utter ourselves, rise, with a kind of imposing individuality, before us? Are we not haunted by a keen sense of the peculiar tastes and idiosyncrasies with which we are communing? Do we not sometimes picture to ourselves the very expression of countenance with which each sentence of our epistle will be read? And are we not thus insensibly led to adopt our pen-craft to the pride, the taste, the humour, the curiosity, or the approbativeness of our correspondent—in other words, to write what we think will give pleasure to the particular individual? Now this is the great obstacle to a good letter—that is, as an exponent of the heart and mind of the writer. The necessity of consulting the fastidious taste, the iron prejudice, or the morbid sensitiveness of another; the hopelessness of being understood either in our humorous mood or our grave sentiment,

chills, limits, and modifies that free and wayward utterance which is the peculiar grace of a letter. Imagine Lamb's letter to Bernard Barton, on the occasion of Fontleroy's execution, addressed to a man of literal mind; or one of Walpole's telegraphs of fashionable life, sent to the deacon of a village church in New England!

There is, indeed, no act of life into which enters a more delicate sense of the appropriate, than that of letter-writing. It requires the skill, tact, refinement, and sympathetic address of personal intercourse, without affording any of the excuses for their deficiency which the latter gives; for we cannot forget that letter-writing is a deliberate act; it allows of time to think, arrange ideas, and choose expressions; and, at the same time, repudiates all traces of study, and must be impulsive to yield pleasure. Fine talkers know how to appreciate a good listener; and good writers only want the right kind of relations—the felicitous influence of a noble companionship or true affinity, to elicit letters imbued with their best intelligence and feeling.

The confidence between Madame de Sevigné and her daughter was entire; the tastes of both were refined, and the minds of both were highly educated; nature allied them by her most sacred tie; and habit had rendered their intercourse, to one at least, a necessity, and to both a source not only of heartfelt enjoyment, but intellectual satisfaction. Hence the mother was free from that most fatal check to epis-

tolary excellence—reserve; she could indulge every gush of feeling, every vagary of imagination, every passing mood, in writing to one so thoroughly known and so profoundly dear; she could write what she chose and how she chose;—hence, the only artificial thing in her letters is the style, which is sometimes too elegant to appear natural, an inference we dismiss at once, however, when we consider that its refinements were caught from a social culture which made the habit a second nature. The *abandon* of her letters is owing, in no small degree, to the person to whom they were addressed, who elicited her nature freely. To this we are indebted for their vitality; and, therefore, while agreeing with one of her critics, that *l'affection le plus legitimé a besoin de se contenir et de se régler*, we congratulate ourselves upon that unrestrained exercise of maternal love, which led Madame de Sevigné to talk so frankly upon paper to her daughter, that the cordial echo of her voice reached posterity.

The superiority of women in the epistolary art has often been noticed, and may be readily accounted for. No form of literary development is so natural, so directly the offspring of feeling and observation, and so akin to and associated with the interests and diversions of home. The objection to a blue-stocking is that she has yielded a greater to a less attraction, that the graces of female character and influence, more beautiful and efficient than all philosophy or fame can yield, are sacrificed to mere attainment;

and that the solace and inspiration of a woman's nature are overlaid by intellectual hardihood. And this perverse substitution of acquired for spontaneous charms, is seldom unattended with exacting vanity or repulsive pretension. It is, too, the consciousness of a reputation for authorship or wit, on the part of literary ladies, that causes men of earnest feeling to turn from female celebrities to the less hackneyed and more natural intelligence, that expands only in the atmosphere of personal and retired sympathy. The advantage of the letter as an exponent of a woman's nature is, that it is, after all, only written conversation, the artless play of her mind, the candid utterance of her sentiment, designed only to be interpreted by one she loves; it does not impeach her delicacy, or render worldly her aspirations; the sacred privacy of her life is preserved, while the fancy and the thought active in her bosom, find vent.

The great attraction of the letters of Madame de Sevigné is, that they constantly exhibit the woman; noble without arrogance, intelligent without pride, gentle and tender, yet unsubdued and hopeful; now naively capricious, now seriously fond; vivacious one moment and earnest the next; often childlike in emotion, and ever imbued with good sense in practical affairs; full of tact, variety, clearness of perception, quickness and warmth of sympathy, disinterested zeal, admiration for talent and bravery, and habitual religious trust—"*Je ne*," she says, "*je ne*

me pique ni de fermeté, ni de philosophie; mon cœur me méne et me conduit." In other words, she feels, acts, and writes like a true woman; whether breathing a solemn inquiry as to the eternal future, thoughtfully contemplating the death of Turenne, or gaily informing her darling child that some friend has sent her a pair of the *plus jolis souliers du monde;* whether entirely yielding to an ardent impulse, or gradually reasserting her rationality and conscientiousness with the sober second thought. Even her cousin, Bussy-Rabutin, though at first her *detracteur*, like the rest of her acquaintance, ended in being her sincere *admirateur*. The literary value of her letters consists in their being souvenirs and examples of style; their moral worth lies in the lively and sweet reflection of sustained yet gentle womanhood they contain;—making us feel what refreshment and inspiration female society, when elevated by right sentiments, and "touched to finer issues" by mental cultivation, can legitimately impart.

The Philologist.

HORNE TOOKE.

To appreciate this subject in all its meaning, let us recall and compare the associations of a Quaker meeting, where impressive silence broods over a human assemblage; a school of mutes, where recourse to signs gives touching evidence of the absolute need of communication; and a Jewish Synagogue, where are chanted the holy records of a primitive faith in the original language which has survived intact the utter dispersion of a race. Thus we realize the natural law of expression, the solemn effect of its voluntary suspension, and the perpetuity of its verbal forms. Nothing is apparently more transient than a word; yet no monument of the past equals in age and authenticity that of language. It is the most reliable medium for transmitting facts. It appears evident that this wonderful instrument, if we may so designate it, began in instinctive sounds. An ingenious Italian grammarian reckons more than twenty natural interjections, expressive of diverse emotions; and these utterances greatly resemble those of the animal creation. In the height of

insanity and fanaticism, in lunatic asylums, among barbarous tribes, and at camp-meetings, are sometimes heard these primitive and brutal attempts at expression; and they seem to point to the lowest source of language. From this to picture-writing the transition is natural; and equally so from the latter to alphabetical signs, which seem to have originated in the abbreviation of hieroglyphics into linear shapes. Vast ingenuity and learning have been expended in the attempt to trace all languages to a common origin; but while the Sanscrit is recognised as the most ancient, other tongues appear to have retained their individuality during an indefinite period, and to have equal claims to an independent source. The Chinese, we may conjecture, indicates the point where picture-writing reached its acme, and with it their civilization became stationary; for, although four thousand years old, it has only an alphabet of ideas, not of sounds. The first intelligent process in the art of expression was, doubtless, to give names to visible objects, as Adam did in Paradise. We see the instinct in children and savages. Hence it is generally conceded that the substantive was first-born of the parts of speech, and then the verb.

If we admit the probability that its rudiments were inarticulate sounds, it is obvious that these were modified by local circumstances and physical facts—such as climate and organization. Many of the individual traits of language are directly trace-

able to such causes; the contracting of particular muscles, opening and shutting the mouth with more or less freedom, and the greater or less inhalation and exhalation of breath—habits which result from modes of life, the temperature of the atmosphere, and similar causes. These, operating on the first inventors of articulate sounds, gave character to the rest, and partly account for the prevalence of vowels and consonants, the accentuation, and other vocal habitudes. Those who have examined this branch of the subject with nicety, assert that what is causal, is not expressed without gutturals; what is living and moving, always require labials; and what is dead or dormant, dentals—these terms indicating the part enacted by the throat, lips, and teeth, in the process of articulation. An ingenious writer, Kraitzer, says that these elementary articulations are often blended in words, and even in roots, by which is obtainable a knowledge of that notion of the thing which was held at the time the word was appropriated to it. "Out of these primitive or modified sounds," he adds, "many groups and combinations are composed; and to inquire into the laws which regulate the combination of sounds, and the laws for the appropriation of these sounds to the expression of thought, is the first and best discipline of the senses and the mind, and is the only learning of languages worthy the name—a philological science which furnishes the key to all languages."

The Port Royal Grammar of the seventeenth cen-

tury, is usually considered the first practical recognition of anything like a philosophy of language; but to Catherine II. of Russia seems to belong the honour of taking the initiative in the science of philology. She employed two capable *savans* to prepare a comparative vocabulary of all the languages of the world. Subsequently, two learned Germans published a scientific classification, under the title of Mithridates, held in great esteem, though chiefly familiar to the scholar. Since the commencement of this century, philology has advanced with the greatest rapidity; and many celebrated names might be cited as identified with its successful cultivation. The labourers in this vineyard have repudiated the old idea of a common origin, so pertinaciously held, and shown that the difference in beauty and richness between the various languages is more one of degree than kind, and altogether the result of cultivation—the Greek being, in itself, no more perfect than the Algonquin, only more refined, enlarged, and modified by culture.

At a casual view, there would seem little connexion between the career of politics and the study of languages; and yet, in literary history, they are frequently associated. The facilities that ambassadors enjoy for the investigation of national dialects, and the necessity, in diplomatic intercourse, to consider, with unusual nicety, the significance and application of words, may partly account for the fact that, while the classic tongues have been cultivated

by scholars like Porson, Bentley, and Parr, much of the light which modern research has thrown upon the philosophy of language, has been derived from statesmen. Sir William Jones and Mackintosh, while in India, studiously examined and illustrated the Asiatic idioms. Sismondi, whose great aim was to be a lucid expositor of universal civil history, availed himself of the collateral aid of philological data. Cobbett wrote a grammar; Lord Kaimes the Elements of Criticism. In our country, Duponceau, a linguist of some note, was by profession devoted to the civil law. Pickering was a legislator and municipal officer. To Gallatin, who was most honourably engaged during the most critical period of our annals in responsible official life, and to Schoolcraft, for many years a government agent on the northern frontier, we are chiefly indebted for accurate information respecting the aboriginal languages. Mezzofanti, the celebrated interlocutor of so many tongues, was a cardinal. But the most remarkable instance of this alliance between politics and philology is that of Horne Tooke. His interest in the latter was doubtless sustained by the natural activity of an ingenious mind; although, with characteristic humour, he insists that his attention was first bestowed upon it in self-defence, and declares, in the preface to his earliest publication, that it was occasioned by his having been made "the victim of two prepositions and a conjunction," which he calls, with a quaint energy, "the abject instruments of his

civil extinction." It is true, however, that in his, as in so many other trials under the law of libel, the question of guilt or innocence was made to depend upon the hypercritical interpretation of a phrase; and the exigency naturally suggested inquiries into the original authority and laws of language.

This, in common with other subjects of general concern, had suffered greatly from being abandoned to pedants. Indeed, perhaps there is no branch of learning which has been more narrowed to the petty service of merely technical scholars than this. The importance of its details was exaggerated; it was studied as an abstraction; its natural simplicity rendered confused; and a certain mysterious set of grammatical formulas substituted for a comprehensive insight into actual principles. Tooke approached the subject as if it had never been subjected to this complex treatment. He undertook to examine it as the botanist does plants, or the geologist fossils. Regarding language as a branch of natural history, he treated words with the cool and systematic analysis that a physiologist treats animal life, tracing back the quadruped to the animalculæ. In this way, he soon satisfied himself that the only absolute and natural parts of speech are nouns and verbs, others so called being nothing more than abbreviations, rendered formidable by elaborate grammarians. Davy reducing a gas into its elementary form, or Audubon gathering specimens of birds and arranging them into species, did not more completely follow

the inductive method than Tooke, in distributing words into families and genera, and tracing their lineage to a primal expression. "The only method," he asserts, "of ascertaining in what manner speech originates, is to inquire historically into the changes which single words undergo; and, from the mass of instances within the examination of our experience, infer the general law of their formation." The knowledge of Horne Tooke was inadequate to the complete elucidation of his theory—his acquaintance with languages being confined to Latin and Greek, French and Italian, and his study to maintain the argument, being chiefly given to Anglo-Saxon. His opponents, however, who were neither few nor unskilful, in many cases acknowledged the truth of his principle, while objecting to the completeness of the evidence.

Tooke was a prominent liberal, and a vigorous opponent of the American War; and was tried for sedition—the charge being founded upon the phraseology of a resolution he offered, at a meeting of the Constitutional Society, in favour of the widows of those who fell at Lexington. He suffered a year's imprisonment, and paid a fine of two hundred pounds. This apparently untoward event seems to have opened his way to celebrity; for he carried on his philological researches to beguile the tedium of captivity; and the shrewd and courageous defence which he made, on trial, established his reputation for talent. Born of humble parents in 1726, and edu-

cated at Westminster, he visited France in the capacity of tutor; he then took orders, after entering the Inner Temple. His acquaintance with Wilkes, at Paris, however, awakened a dormant love of politics, and he soon became involved in club life and partisan warfare. The most important result of his activity, in this sphere, grew out of his having induced two printers to violate a rule of the Commons, by publishing their debates. Prosecution followed, and the House was defeated; since which, the right to make public the doings and speeches of that body has been recognised. In 1773, Tooke applied himself earnestly to the study of law; but was not admitted to practice on account of being a priest. His legal attainments, however, united as they were to unusual sagacity, enabled him so effectually to serve his kinsman, Mr. Tooke, of Purley, at whose residence the discussions on language were ostensibly held, that he secured that gentleman's consistent friendship, and inherited his estate. His parliamentary career was uneventful. Some of his pamphlets had a temporary effect; and his trial for high treason, from the principle involved, has an historical interest. His addresses to the populace, when a candidate for Westminster, are said to have been rich in humour. His manners were polished, but he was apt to indulge in coarseness of speech. In the enjoyment of his comfortable domain, and the society of many political and literary friends, his old age was serenely passed; and he died at the

age of seventy-seven. He is now chiefly remembered as the author of "The Diversions of Purley," a work that advocates the philosophy of language, and indicates one, at least, of the true methods of tracing its origin and ascertaining its principles.

This ingenious writer contends, and with great apparent reason, that prepositions and conjunctions are to be found among the other parts of speech, and that ignorance of this one fact betrayed grammarians into the prolix mysteries of their system; he also clearly demonstrates that these abbreviations—aptly called the wheels of language—improve as each tongue is enriched and refined, and are often borrowed into one from another more highly cultivated. As illustrations, we have in French the preposition *chez*, which is only a corruption of the Italian noun *casa; sans*, as obviously derived from *senza*, which is an abbreviation of *assenza*. So in regard to adjectives, he laments that so many are strictly foreign, as it would render the English language more harmonious and easily attainable to foreigners, if the words indicative of qualities were educed directly from their legitimate nouns. "Participles and adjectives," he says, "not understood as such, have caused a metaphysical jargon and a false morality, which can only be dissipated by etymology." Although, as the earnest advocate of this process, as the means of arriving at truth, Tooke was unmercifully assailed by argument and ridicule, it may be doubted if the real importance of such a test was at all understood

prior to his bold and original theory. In its application, he certainly opened new vistas in the dense and tangled forest of words, and indicated how the light of intelligence could best illumine its recesses. He proved how often ideas had been mistaken for terms, words identified with things, and the inevitable confusion that results; that science, politics, and literature had essentially suffered from this cause; and that when expression is not quite clear, it is owing, not to any necessary imperfection in language, but to want of precision of thought. "Abbreviations and corruptions," he adds, "are always busied with the words which are most frequently in use. Letters, like soldiers, being very apt to desert and drop off in a long march, especially if their passage happens to be near the confines of an enemy's country."

The word *right* he treats with a peculiar etymological zest, in order to justify his actual conduct. He derives it from *rectum*, the past participle of the Latin verb *regere;* whence the Italian *ritto*, an abbreviation of *diritto* from *dirigere*, whence *dritto*, the ancient French *droict*, the modern *droit*, etc., meaning *what is ordered.* Tooke contends that, in his political course, he only obeyed a higher law than he transgressed—viz., what was ordered by God. *Wrong* he traces to the verb *to wring*, from the Latin *torquere*, in Italian *torto*—wrung, or wrested from the right, or ordered. *Odd*, he makes a participle of owed—*i. e.*, one owed to make up a pair. But it is needless to multiply instances of the ingenuity of Tooke.

Occasionally he exaggerates the efficiency of his favourite principles; yet his original and intelligent mode of dealing with a subject previously abandoned to merely technical writers, has done much to induce that free spirit of philological inquiry, and that rational use of language as a convenience, and recognition of its original simplicity as an art, the benefit of which we daily enjoy.

It is highly interesting to trace the analogy between language and national character. Herder calls the Hebrew language "an abyss of verbs," and to this peculiarity may be traced its adaptation to sublime expression, and its affinity with the original grandeur of the Jewish nation. The arrangement of words, in Latin, is one striking cause of that noble and sonorous flow so productive of rhetorical effect. It conveys the impression of power and dignity; there is something of command in its very sound, and it seems to echo the pride and self-reliance that we habitually associate with the idea of an ancient Roman. This peculiar facility in the transposition of words, leads, in the best writers, to a euphonical and effective collocation, in which resides the genius of the language; and this obvious advantage is owing mainly to the fact, that the termination of each adjective determines its reference, whereas, in English, it must follow or succeed the noun which it qualifies. Hence the frequent beauty of the phrases, and the terse combination of words that render the study of Latin so excellent a mental discipline;

hence, too, its ease and perfection as a written tongue.

Slowly modified by the dialects of the North, it was finally superseded in France by what has been termed the Roman Rustic, from its being spoken by the common people. Thus, although retaining both words and idioms of Latin, by the time of Charlemagne this new vulgar dialect had taken the place of the classic with the mass, and gradually assumed the present characteristics of the French. One of the most obvious traits of this language, is that the last syllable is usually long and accented, while the reverse is generally the case in English. Hence its extreme liveliness, so accordant with the vivacious temperament of the nation. But this briskness is purchased at the expense of the dignity which gives such impressiveness to the language of Britain and Spain. Men of thoughtful genius have always complained of its inadequacy to express elevated sentiment. Montaigne says it "quails under a powerful conception;" and Lamartine declares himself a poet without a language. It is adapted chiefly to the "eloquence of indifference." Its merits are almost exclusively colloquial. It is pointed in antithesis, but inappropriate to the earnest and lofty; expressive, to the highest degree, in Molière and Madame de Sevigné; but irresponsive to the heroic emotions uttered by Racine. Hence the prejudice cherished towards it by men of intensely reflective natures like Alfieri and Coleridge.

The Germans are rich in thoughtfulness and sentiment; and their language is so characteristic of these national qualities as to lead one of our own poets to apply it to old Fuller's praise of the Scripture: "Wheresoever its surface doth not laugh with corn, then the heart thereof is merry with mines, affording, when not plain matters, hidden mysteries." The character of King Alfred, with whom the Anglo-Saxon tongue is so intimately associated, typifies its noble simplicity. It originally consisted of two dialects, the Saxon and Danish; the kings of the former race having reigned six hundred years, and of the latter only twenty, which accounts for the extreme disproportion now traceable in these original elements. May we not, however, recognise the old affinity in our recently developed sympathy with Swedish literature, exhibited not only in similarity of language, but in modes of thought and domestic life? No circumstance is more significant of the self-reliance of the English race than the fact that, notwithstanding the attempts of their Norman conquerors to superinduce their own language on the vanquished, the experiment not only failed, but most of the words of Norman origin still retained in our vernacular, are law terms, derived from the edicts of the invaders. Swift, one of the most correct writers, addressed a tract to the Earl of Oxford, suggesting a revision of the language, on the ground of the prevalence of grammatical errors; but Bishop Lowth considers this very neglect of rules an evidence of

its great simplicity, which seems not to require study. This characteristic has been preserved through the freedom enjoyed by those to whom English is a native tongue, and one undegraded by the influence of censorship or inquisition. It seems, too, destined to advance with the progress of the race. The children of the fifty thousand annual emigrants to our own shores, acquire it at the free schools; and it is now taught to the rising generation in India; so that the world seems destined to be Anglo-Saxonized, and the English language to do for it in an educational what the French has done in a social way.

By its Saxon basis, the English assimilates with the Gothic languages of the Continent, by its slight Norman intermixture with the French, by its Latin derivation with the classic; and, by its Welsh terms, it preserves a faint alliance with the ancient Britons. The activity and tact in affairs, which lead the descendants of the Anglo-Saxons habitually to economise time, are stamped upon their language, in which words of many syllables are shortened, often at the expense of a certain noble grace. It is a characteristic sacrifice of beauty to utility. Even without any philosophical argument, our sense of the appropriate readily detects the peculiar adaptation of languages. Thus, when listening to the refined and apt terms of a dialogue in French comedy, the chat between a lady and her maid, or a spirited youth and a *naive* grisette, we are struck with the peculiar

graces of the French tongue; as we hear the distinct yet liquid emphasis on the vowels in an exquisite opera solo, we realize the musical expression of Italian; and, while stirred by the grave rhetoric of the pulpit or the forum, we feel how admirably our own language gives scope to argumentative eloquence. Shenstone quotes, as an illustration of the diverse genius of the English and French language, the common phrase, "*sur le tapis*," and *on the anvil*—the same figure of speech being rendered by an artificial and a manly image. In the same way, certain terms that have such a peculiar expressiveness in one language as to be constantly transferred to others, indicate the prevalence of the thing or quality they designate. Thus it has often been remarked that the French have no word strictly corresponding with the English word *comfort;* neither does it enter prominently into their ideal of life, as with their more phlegmatic neighbours. When Othello says "Not another comfort like to this," in allusion to his delight at meeting Desdemona, he conveys the idea of the lasting principle of domestic love, in distinction to the French idea of casual enjoyment. Such phrases as *naive, esprit, à la mode, comme il faut*, &c., are equally significant of national taste. We have no phrase exactly agreeing with *m'ennuyée.* It is contrary to Anglo-Saxon self-reliance and self-respect to confess to any but an objective *bore. Nonchalance*, also, we frequently use for lack of a precise English synonym. The

Italian adjective *simpatica*, evidences the sympathetic temper of the race, and their exaggeration is shown by their use of superlatives. A fair one of that nation will be *desperato* at the loss of a bandbox.

Philology reveals the historical as well as the characteristic elements of national life. The recondite branches of this subject explored by Champollion and Niebuhr, form but a single phase of a vast realm of truth. To a philosophical mind, it is an experiment of the highest interest to discover, by analysing a living tongue, the sources of its origin as landmarks of history. Thus, a careful dissection of the Spanish language resummons the successive races who ruled the Peninsula. After the Iberians, Celts, Phœnicians, and Carthaginians, came the Romans to stamp their vernacular upon the nation. Latin, too, was long the chosen medium of Christianity; and thus, both through conquest and faith, it became the foundation of the present dialect. When the Goths overran Spain, while they readily adopted the Latin words, their minds were not sufficiently abstract to easily understand its construction; and upon its vocabulary they superinduced their own less intricate form of speech. The last important element was introduced by the Moorish invaders; and thus the Spanish has been justly called a product of the union between "the Gothicized Latin of the North and the Arabic of the South." A native philologist has carried his researches to so curious an extent as to

estimate the exact proportion of each language, including the gipsy and modern continental words, in that at present deemed standard in Spain. The statement gives us an immediate insight into the chief historical events and inherited traits, which, while moulding the people, have left enduring memorials in their language. Few places in Europe afford more available materials for such investigations than the island of Sicily. Less overlaid by modern improvements, from its insulated position and jealous government, and far less invaded by the spirit of the age, the customs and language of the inhabitants have remained comparatively intact. It is therefore easy to light upon the verbal traces of the various dynasties. In the Sicilian dialect yet speak the Greek, the Roman, the Carthaginian, the Arab, the Norman, the German, the French, and the Spaniard. Nor are the predominant of these tongues always inextricably mingled in the popular speech. I have been at a village within twenty miles of the capital, on a day of festival, where the peasants wore the garb and spoke the language of Greece. In the towns on the southern coast, Arabic words prevail; elsewhere, Greek and Provençal. A single remarkable instance, in English, may be cited to show how the traces of conquest linger in the vocabulary of a nation; the generic terms mutton and veal came from the epicurean Normans, whose own tongue furnished no synonyms for the sheeps' heads and calves' feet they threw their vassals. In proof of the essen-

tial aid to historical researches yielded by philology, it is enough to mention that it has proved races, now separated by vast tracts of land, to be allied, and to have migrated from a primitive seat. Even the course and direction of such transits have been thus discovered. On account of these and similar facts, Humboldt declares that the most brilliant results of modern study, in the last sixty years, have grown out of the philosophical investigation of language.

The metaphysical relations of language have been but partially explored. Sydney Smith remarks that an emancipation from the tyranny of words is essential to the right conduct of the understanding and pursuit of truth, and that "Sight is so much the favourite and impressive sense, that almost the whole language of metaphysics is borrowed from it; we have began of late years to use the word tact; and we might," he adds, with characteristic humour, "extend the metaphor in familiar style to the sense of smelling; and say of a man, that he has a good nose for the ridiculous;" and it is curious that such an expression observers of physiognomy know to be founded in nature.

So far removed from exact truth is the original definition of the word language—a means of communicating thought—that Talleyrand's saying that the only use of words is to conceal it, is no longer considered quite ironical. An ancient philosopher, observing how great a human distinction is speech, and how closely identified it is with ideas and emotion,

maintained that it was essential to the soul. Experiments prove that we think in language. Whoever has been obliged to use a foreign idiom has realized this, often carrying on a process of thought in his native language while speaking the newly acquired, until habit has made the latter so familiar as to excite an instinctive consciousness of its terms without the exercise of memory. Paralysis of the tongue is said to interfere with verbal thinking. Yet, notwithstanding these and many similar facts, men of profound inward experience complain of the inadequacy of language. Stewart, the metaphysician, declares it only gives hints to another of what is in our own minds—like the shadow of a picture—that is, only suggestive, not absolutely demonstrative, and therefore cannot, with mathematical precision, convey abstract ideas from one intellect to another; their conception being as various as are the different species of minds.

A great observer has remarked that "Language reacts upon thought and animates it, as it were, with the breath of life; and it is this mutual reaction which makes words more than the signs and forms of thought." Thus we perceive that it is quite unphilosophical to compare language to a mirror or a daguerreotype. The simple relation it may have once held to things, has been rendered intricate by the increase of ideas and the complexity of life. Art, too, has induced a great modification. The change is as entire as that between the primitive

tent of a wandering tribe, most economically adapted to bare necessity, and the elaborate, sublime, and variously ornamented cathedral. A spiritual philosopher has touched upon this subject with a thoughtful discrimination. "Language," he says, "consisting as it does of arbitrary signs, is manifestly a rudiment of the material system; it is a fruit and a consequence of our corporeity, and might, with some propriety, be designated as the point of contact where mind and matter artificially but most intimately blend. In the recesses of the human soul, there is a world of thought, which, for want of determinate and fit symbols, never assumes any fixed form. We may, therefore, conjecture a finer and more subtle language in a higher economy—that the future corporeal structure shall be the instrument of the mind, vital without waste, unfearful of dissolution, active without exhaustion, and perfectly in harmony with spirit." It is because language is artificial, that, as an interpreter of nature, it demands allowance. The phrenologists locate the organ of language at the base of the brain, and rank it among the inferior intellectual faculties, if such it may be called. We all know that there is no essential proportion between fluency of speech and originality of thought; that the most apt at expression are, by no means, the most rich in ideas; and that the gift of expression is often unallied either with mental power or genuine sentiment. Hence the distrust in words that seems to increase with experience; hence the

reserved speech of truly wise men, and the loquacity of the thoughtless and irresponsible. "The secret of using language well, is to use it from a full mind," says a critic; and if we analyze literature, we shall find that it is the nice adaptation of this delicate material instrument to the immaterial thought, and genuine feeling, that gives to expression its true signification. Only the superficial can be imposed upon by artfully combined words, exaggerated utterance, and affected eloquence. The tone, the consistency, the vital force of speech asserts itself in spite of the tricks of rhetoric, and that insinuating flow of mere words that we familiarly call the "gift of the gab." The signs of ideas and ideas themselves are two different things; and the capacity to deal with the one is no evidence of any power to comprehend the other. It is on this account that we so often find mere linguists as devoid of original mind as parrots. Like mocking-birds, they can echo every tongue, but it is with a purely mechanical skill—more surprising as a feat than glorious as an achievement.

Vocabularies have been chiefly enriched by the poets. To the writings of Juan de Mena, in Spain, is traced the germ of the Castilian. The troubadours of Provence, though their language is now extinct, may be said to live in the graceful sweetness that Petrarch borrowed from them while at Avignon, and permanently incorporated into Italian through his beautiful Canzonierie. The intensity of Dante

imparted to this "soft, bastard Latin" a vigour and expressiveness before unknown; while to Bocaccio it is indebted for a kind of Ciceronian eloquence, in prose, derived from his classic taste and studies. Cervantes restored obsolete phrases that had been ignorantly discarded from his native tongue, and made new compounds. In the dialects of the North can be easily discovered the influence of primitive bards, who, under the title of skalds, minnesingers, or minstrels, accompanied the armies or sung at the feasts of their country. But it is a narrow view of the agency of poets in advancing language, to confine our regard to the mere introduction of new and apposite words. To their significant use and euphonous combination under the influence of that blended insight and sensibility which we call genius, may be ascribed, in no small degree, the gradual expansion and refinement of language. The use of this medium of expression is an art not less than that of marble and colours. Felicity in the application of words and phrases to ideas and sentiments is, indeed, a natural, yet rare gift. Why is it that certain lines, verses, and paragraphs, expressive often of a hackneyed truth, retain a singular influence over the ear and mind? Why does the beauty of language enable us to clothe in its flexible and delicate garb, ideas that would be intolerable if represented in painting or sculpture? It is obviously on account of its minute harmony and infinite suggestiveness as an art. There is, indeed, as great a

diversity between the use of this wonderful instrument by a grossly ignorant and a highly gifted man, as between the signal-fires of the middle ages and the electric telegraph of our own times. It has also its morality, as well as its philosophy. It would require an elaborate treatise to point out the abuses of language. It has been one of the most effective agents to mystify and betray the people, in the hands of the demagogue, who, like Belial, as

> "His tongue
> Dropt manna, could make the worse appear
> The better reason, to perplex and dash
> Maturest counsels."

Those who have a vivid sense of truth in its more delicate relations, can estimate the frequent inadequacy and perversion of language that custom has authorized. Dr. Johnson was conscious of this incongruity in regard to the language of the marriage-service in the English Church, which he justly declared was altogether too refined for universal use. "It is calculated," he said, "only for the best kind of marriages; whereas we should have a form for matches of convenience." It is on account of this want of entire correspondence between sentiment and language, that so many high emotions and exalted fancies "lie sepulchred in monumental thought." In its highest utterance, when altogether earnest and sincere, as in passages of the Bible, and of Dante, Shakspeare, or Milton, language seems to

bring us nearer to the Deity than any other human attribute, and to be almost the direct result of his inspiration. It is, then, a key to truth; it lends wings to the soul and makes audible the very heart. Its essence is clearly picturesque, as may be realized by noting the expressions of children and savages. Even those words now used to express an abstract idea are derived from a visible source. Things naturally become types and symbols of thoughts. It is a striking though unappreciated fact in national history, that language declines with manners. Compare the terse, manly, and rich style of the writers of the age of Elizabeth with the diffuse, enervated diction that prevailed in that of Charles II. Strength, indeed, both of thought and feeling, naturally utters itself with concise vigour, or seeks the aid of impressive images. The least cultivated races act upon this instinct. An Indian petition to one of our state governments for grants of subsistence, sums up, as it were, the misfortunes of the tribe, in two natural metaphors: "Our feet are unaccustomed to the chase; their swiftness is no more; our hands are unfamiliar with the bow, and the sureness of the arrow is lost,"—an instance, in a barbarous people, of the law which Shelley recognises in the highest poetry, when he observes that "strong passion expresses itself in metaphors borrowed from objects alike remote or near, and casts over all the shadow of its own greatness." But, even in the apt use of common words, the true poet illustrates the

philosophy of language. Shakspeare gives many philological hints. Thus, Iago's "*Indeed!*" contains a world of meaning. The phrase "Letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would*," tells a long story; as does Bertram's complaint—

> "I am commanded here, and kept in coil
> With *too young*, and *the next year*, and *'tis too early*."

And Tooke, to show the legitimate meaning of two conjunctions, quotes the impatient observation of Cleopatra—

> MESS. But—yet—Madame—
> CLEO. I do not like but—yet. It does allay
> The good precedent. Fie upon but—yet!
> But—yet—is as a gaoler, to bring forth
> Some monstrous malefactor!

Humour is often little else than connecting verbally what is opposed in thought; and this, as well as many analogous indications of the intricate relation between words and thoughts, justifies the statement of Berkeley, that the "communication of ideas is not the only use of language, but to excite passions." This is likewise apparent from its musical capabilities, which enables "the sound to seem an echo to the sense." "Words," says Lord Kaimes, "have a separate effect on the mind abstracted from their signification and their imitative power; they are more or less agreeable to the ear by the fulness,

sweetness, faintness, or roughness of their tones." So many elements, therefore, enter into what is called style, that it is quite absurd to endeavour to graft its excellence by means of text-books and special directions. Grammatical rules may thus be taught; but the characteristic in style is innate. The difference between that of Dante and Metastasio, Burke and Cobbett, Johnson and Goldsmith, is analogous to that between their respective characters. Perspicuity is generally conceded to be its first essential quality; yet even this is dependent on clearness of ideas and strength of personal conviction. Vague notions and an irresolute purpose tincture the expression as well as the consciousness. So greatly, indeed, do moral traits influence the modes of speech and writing, that the reader or auditor of nice ear and discriminating judgment, can often infer the disposition and ruling tendency of an individual from his style; whether he has simplicity or ostentation of character, whether reckless or methodical, distinguished by fidelity or tact, geniality or reserve, strength or infirmity of purpose, may be discerned by his manner of using language.

The Magazine-Writer.

WILSON.

If we compare the repast of a band of hunters or pioneers with the arts of gastronomy obtainable at a Parisian restaurant of the first order, we have a view of the refinements of which the process of physical nourishment is susceptible, analogous to what has taken place in the "feast of reason and the flow of soul," as they are displayed in literature. The rude yet wholesome banquet of the student of antiquity, slowly digging roots from the field of knowledge, through the medium of some antiquated tome written in a style and language wholly foreign to his ordinary life and associations, and the by-way refreshment cultivated taste affords the epicurean *leterato* of the nineteenth century, are as diverse in the facility with which they are acquired, and in comparative delicacy and versatility, as the primitive and the artistic resources of gastronomy. One of the most popular forms in which literary recreation and enlightenment has been thus dispensed, is that of periodicals. They originated in the versatile demands of

the mental appetite, growing out of increased leisure and wider cultivation, and in their very fragility, variety, and winsome arts, have not only met a conscious want, but reflected the opinions and modified the taste of the age.

In the brilliant galaxy of names memorably associated with magazine literature, perhaps no single one represents more completely the peculiar combination of talent requisite for its felicitous exercise, than Christopher North. In its palmy days, Blackwood's Magazine realized an ideal, in its kind, rarely quite equalled, and never surpassed by subsequent or contemporary rivals; and this it accomplished in spite of the opposing influence of party views, and the violation of many chivalric principles and social amenities. This triumph was owing chiefly to the fertile resources and varied aptitude of Wilson, whose mind, temperament, and disposition, singularly fitted him to exemplify the capabilities of a periodical writer. It is usual to consider the aim and the qualities of such a vocation superficial, though brilliant. Such an estimate may apply to certain special phases of magazine literature, but not to the art considered as a whole, and embracing all the features involved in the term. For this there is needed, in the first place, a good basis of solid acquirements, a latent mine of good sense, a well-balanced philosophical mind, a large fund of literary knowledge, accurate and profound yet available; a just insight, and a comprehensive view—not

less than wit, fancy, and all the light artillery of popular writing. There must be also genuine enthusiasm to give vitality to lucubrations that are destined to find their way into general circulation; a sense of the beautiful to lend a charm to style; and, above all, an excellent address, which alone imparts the ease and attractiveness which make literature social in its tone—a quality essential to the species we are considering. These requisites belong, in large measure and in an extraordinary degree, to Christopher North. His *nom de plume* is far more of a reality to his familiar readers than the actual person of many less vigorous and genial companions.

In this very ability to actualize himself in writing, not only as a man entertaining certain opinions, but as a boon-companion, tasteful caterer, and jovial host at the feast of letters, we have the best evidence of his natural fitness for the office he assumed. The professorship of Moral Philosophy which he has satisfactorily filled to successive classes, for so long a period, in Edinburgh, is sufficient testimony, independent of that his writings afford, of that extent and solidity of attainment we have designated as a requisite basis for a permanently successful magazinist; while the more facile graces that render the weapons in the armoury of learning and reflection easy to wield, and yet efficient in scope and aim, we not only trace in the fruits, but recognise in the very nature of Christopher North. The central principle of his genius, the secret charm whereby he

filled the throne of magazine literature, is *zest*. This quality he imparted to the effusions of his pen by virtue of his own intense relish of nature and letters. He is a born sportsman, with the instinct for game in his very blood; accordingly he loves the freedom and excitement derivable from earnest pursuit, from contact with the influences of nature, and from the exhilaration of success. The characteristics of the sportsman he exhibits not less in writing than in hunting. He is often as boisterous, jovial, and spirited over a new poem or an old reminiscence, as in a shooting-jacket, on a moor, in the bracing winds of autumn; in the former case, too, he follows a scent with as keen pertinacity, and as reckless a step, his eye steadily fixed on the game, sometimes to glorify, and at others to contemn it. Instead of the contemplative air of the student, he exhibits the *qui vive*, bustling ways of a man of the world, halloos after a poet not less than after a stag, and, what is most noticeable, gives his readers a distinct notion of his flavour, as well as of his anatomy. Hence the criticisms of Christopher North have been justly, and were once almost uniquely termed eloquent. Their rhetoric is not sustained as in those of Macaulay, they have not the refined acuteness of Hazlitt, nor are they so profusely sprinkled with wit as those of Sidney Smith; but they have the more widely appreciated quality of zest, and infect the reader, if he has a spark of enthusiasm, or the slightest intellectual appetite,

with the enjoyment of the critic. So far is this sense of personal relish carried, that his *critique* in point of fact, is more like the animated discussion of an author, *viva voce*, than a calm analysis of him with the pen. Christopher North plunges into his works as he would into a forest, makes the air ring with the echoes of his laudation or censure, seems to roll on the flowery turf of poesy, like an enfranchised steed in a meadow, audibly inhales, as it were, the mountain breath of song, and moves with the elastic tread of a lover on his way to a tryst, along the romantic paths which imagination has hung over the barren scenes of the world. His sentient, as well as mental being, enters into the experience he describes, although it is but the reading of a poem. A favourite author warms his blood and quickens his brain like old wine; he grasps a work of genius with the cordial hand of an ardent friend, and, instead of being content to roam the shore, and gaze quietly on the tides of intellectual life, casts himself into them, and loves to feel the swell, and wrestle with the sportive billows. This tendency to identify consciousness with the literary enjoyment of the hour,—this heart as well as hand, and sensitive as well as reflective alliance with genius, is the cause of all that is reliable and peculiar in Christopher North's expositions; it is also the cause of his erroneous and extravagant views. In the lecture-room, and even in the professed review, these would be inexcusable; but, as we allow a certain latitude of expression, and a

somewhat hyperbolical sympathy on festive occasions; so the social character of magazine literature —the experimental and unconventional ground it is thought to occupy, not only permit, but encourage a freedom which has given birth to most desirable fruits. The formalist and the pedant have no place there. There is no ceremonious dignity; and the quips and whims, the hilarity and jokes, the wildest fancies and most sentimental vagaries, may there find legitimate expression. Accordingly, Christopher North set the example of a naturalness, independence, and vivacity which seized upon the common sympathies, and enlisted them in literature.

But he is not only a natural sportsman in the genial, but also in the destructive sense of the term. He has a cruel as well as a benign mood. In the excitement of a hot pursuit he sometimes forgets what is due to calm reason, to generous feeling, and to truth,—witness his sneers at our own country. Indeed, to judge him aright, even as a man, we must regard the author in two entirely distinct aspects, that of a partisan, and that of an artist. In the former character he is open to as much reproof as any writer of the age; the rancour of political animosity and the blindness of literary prejudice have never been exhibited in stronger or more ungrateful contrast than in his writings; the devil and the angel seem to wrestle visibly in his pages. We stand with him beside the Elder's deathbed, or listen, with the sorrowful family, for

the more equal breathing of the child yet lingering between life and death, and in our hearts is a "whole lake of tears;" we read his invectives against a political foe, and recoil at the possibility of having any other than antagonistic emotions roused at his call. We accompany him through the awful scenes of the "City of the Plague," with a feeling of sublime brotherhood, which is, at once and most rudely, dispelled by the gross injustice with which he treats the person or subject unallied to his creed and sympathies. Listen to him in the "Isle of Palms," and when chanting the obsolete and inhuman praises of Toryism, and how difficult to realize the identity of the author; nor can we easily believe that the noble heart that poured forth such an eloquent tribute to the Wild Deer, and expanded with such thorough fellowship in communion with the Ettrick Shepherd, can, all at once, contract itself into such concentrated and bitter energy at the invocation of the demon of party. Again we find the phenomena in a measure explained by organization. Wilson has doubtless a large organ of destructiveness. He relishes, like all hunters, the seizure of his game. He carries into warfare the intensity of feeling exercised so benignly when turned in the channel of generous appreciation. In a word, he hates as well as loves, scorns as well as admires, torments as well as fondles, in a precipitate and exaggerated way. He is at extremes both in the humour of abuse and in the enjoyment of beauty.

It is needless to point out the versatility and readiness of Christopher North. The mere fact of his eminent success in magazine writing, is the best proof of their exercise. The periodical demand and the requisite variety of matter and style in this branch of literature, has caused it to be pursued according to a division of labour; but, in each of its forms, Wilson has been an adept, writing with the same facility poetry, criticism, fiction, and partisan articles, and in each manifesting equal knowledge, vivacity, and ardour, though unfortunately not always the same good temper. His style is more affluent than delicate, though in the refinements of tone he has few superiors. One of his chief talents is that of description; and his power in this consists in giving us the spirit rather than the details of a scene. One might readily infer from his style that the rod and gun were as familiar to his grasp as the pen; that he has been accustomed to breathe the mountain air and brush the dew from the grass. It is not the communion of the philosophic Wordsworth or the ideal Shelley with nature, that we perceive in Wilson, but that more common intercourse based upon the natural affinity between the elements and the human constitution. The prominent charm of his genius is not a classic or quaint vein, like those of Landor and Lamb, but a certain freshness and spirit such as is exhaled by a pleasant morning or an enjoyable comrade. These are the very qualities essential to the kind of literature in which he excelled, and with the pathos for which he is equally

remarkable, afford the "consummation most devoutly to be wished" by the caterer for immediate literary taste. We ascribe their coincidence in him to an unusual endowment of two sources of effect seldom united in the same characters—animal spirits and moral sensibility; the one giving vitality and the other tenderness. His broad shoulders and muscular frame, his once profuse and golden hair, his tall figure, and eye that sparkles with joy and melts with unshed tears, and his solemnly earnest or playfully accented voice, make the man Wilson fitly represent the healthful side of authorship, so often lost in "a pale cast of thought," or that derangement of the animal economy that induces morbid sensitiveness or acrid misanthropy. With Christopher North, literature seems a natural and most pleasing exercise of the faculties, as instinctively pursued as talking or singing, a ramble or a reverie. It differs with him from its more artificial development, as do the waters of a canal and those of a natural spring—the one serviceably bounded and the other gushing at their own sweet will. A dash of the impetuous, indeed, is characteristic of his temperament. He seems to write all his good things in a glow; he makes one lucky spring and has not the patience nor the fastidiousness to polish and modify. His pen, like his feet, moves with alacrity; his chirography being rough and careless. There is a manly directness and a buoyant self-confidence in his style as well as his gait and air, which, though repulsive when against, is delightful when with us.

This gives a peculiar sting to his sarcasm and a unity to his sentiment; it is rather the egotism of feeling than judgment, and makes his expression vigorous and touching. Accordingly we often, even when indignant at the perversity of the author, feel that the heart of the man is noble; and the candid intensity of his appreciation of beauty and truth, softens our resentment at the bigotry of his anathemas.

The opinions of such an author, however, are always to be reconsidered, and to be taken with allowance. It is, therefore, in the more peaceful and happy fields of literary art, it is among the Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life—as the sympathetic recorder of Margaret Lyndsay's trials, or the "Foresters," in his earlier poetic effusions, and in the most kindly vein of his criticism—that we meet Christopher North with unalloyed pleasure. Here, away from the din of sectarian warfare, amid the tranquil scenes of domestic life, or the picturesque beauty of nature, his better feelings awaken, and utter themselves in rare melody. Seldom has the "low sad music of humanity" found a more sweet interpreter. By a kind of psychological sympathy he seems to enter into the very tone of feeling —the spirit of a landscape or the atmosphere of a household—and reproduce them not only to our perceptions but almost to our sensations. In his near, gentle, and serious dealing with grief and love, with piety and sentiment, he touches the same

chord which our own Dana and Hawthorne have caused to vibrate. A national tint, lasting as the heather of her mountains, characterizes his pictures of humble life in Scotland; and the glow of a healthy enthusiasm keeps fresh his loving comments on passing literature and contemporary poets.

Few writers are more indebted to convivial tastes for their success; not even Moore or Dickens, both of whom, in quite different ways, know how to impart the flavour of a banquet so as to tickle the very palate of the reader. Wilson undertook to introduce into print the spirit of table-talk; viands are mixed up with metaphors, poetical quotations with the odour of mountain-dew; Bacchus and Minerva confabulate amicably, and the waters of Helicon blend with the juices of nectar. This double zest, physical and intellectual, this combined feast of material and etherial good things, gave to the Noctes Ambrosianæ their exceeding popularity. Their alternate thoughtfulness and joviality, the vivid scintillations of wit and fancy, the curious simplicity, good-fellowship, and wisdom they unfold, and the contrasted attraction of poetic shepherd and genial scholar, tended, in a great degree, to infuse into periodical literature a frank, personal, and therefore social tone. These conversations, however, are quite unequal, as their consecutive perusal, in a book form, will convince the most sceptical; but, in passages, they may be confidently regarded as among the most pleasing realities of literature.

The Dramatist.

TALFOURD.

THE drama is the most objective form of literature. The author's personality is more completely set aside, and his creative power more directly manifested in this than in any other species of writing. In barbarian ceremonies we see the germ of the art—the aim being to represent, in action, some dominant idea or feeling; the transition from this crude hint to religious rites is obvious, and from the instinct of devotion it branches out into a reflex and echo of the passions, tastes, history, and life of man, and becomes the most expressive and refined of intellectual arts. Perhaps the rarity of great excellence in dramatic literature is chiefly owing to the necessity of uniting accurate observation, wide and deep sympathy, and artistic skill, in order to achieve success, —a combination but seldom realized. A philosophical history of the art would touch the circle of human experience at every point of individual consciousness, domestic life, and public events; for in no literary shape, at once so true and permanent, has "a local

habitation and a name" been given to the workings of the private soul and the order of the world's development.

To Macchiavelli is ascribed the reproduction from ancient examples of a vital drama. In Spain and England, it attained the greatest triumphs in Lope de Vega and Shakspeare; while in France, elegant imitation and adherence to the unities and classic models, long kept it from any absolute relation to life and the people. A learned critic defines tragedy and comedy as having the same mutual interest as earnestness and mirth—the former being the moral and the latter the more sensual phase of our nature; and their alternation the great condition of human existence. They also correspond with the temporary and the infinite, the profound and the conventional, the inward and outward elements in life, from whose conflict, predominance, and union, spring the interest which, embodied by genius, constitutes the drama. Unity and completeness, not so much in the mere narrative as in the moral significance of the drama, are therefore essential; and like a perfect statue, the entire effect on the mind, whether pathetic, sublime, or exquisitely comic, should be harmonious as well as exciting.

In reading the most characteristic passages of the old English dramatists, we seem to be walking alone beside the ocean of life, when its tide has ebbed, and the treasures of the heart lie bare and revealed to our compassionate view. Gems of fancy, deep

caves where the most secret and profound emotions of the soul nestle—fantastic shapes born of lonely reverie, like branches of coral and amber—iris-hued dreams that float in colours as vivid as the gayest weeds of the sea—all crowd upon the inward sense as if the very elements of humanity were before us. The men who wrote thus possessed a moral courage in regard to expression, that we look for in vain in other departments of literature. It would appear that the more robust tone of society, in that age, not only permitted but encouraged a bold utterance. There is often an intensity of feeling conveyed in the dialogue that must have had its origin in reality. Only the situations appear invented; the love, hatred, and remorse are too true to the laws and instincts of the soul not to have been suggested by consciousness. We can only compare the process by which these plays were written, to the affecting cavatinas of an opera, in which the actual sentiment of the composer is embodied, although the scenes and characters are purely historical or imaginary, as is the case in the masterpieces of Mozart and Bellini. Another charm of these dramas is a certain directness and sincerity, as if, far from being ashamed of, the authors gloried in the strength of a passion. Subsequent taste has refined upon this kind of heartiness; language seems to have lost its intimate relation to feeling, and expression has grown tame as life has become complex and diffusive. Yet records of guilt and sorrow as are many of these

plays, it is an invigorating experiment to revert to them. The conventionalities of existence drop away, and the primitive instincts of our nature awaken and re-assert themselves; they are to the lover of humanity what a rich but uncivilized country is to the lover of nature—filling the mind with infinite possibilities, and the heart with a zest for keen and adventurous emotion. There is the same difference between the tone of their rough music and the modulated harmony of later dramas, as between the flavour of game and domestic birds. What constantly developes itself is not so much intelligence and fancy, as soul—that combination of will and passion, that overflowing of the heart, which only the most fervid language can adequately represent. Hence the high rank assigned the drama in literature. Its office is to symbolize action, to portray character, not in its rigid laws, but in its most earnest development. Other writings chiefly depict a state, the drama indicates a process. It is the most living emanation of genius, and requires a vital as well as an intellectual force, a sympathetic as well as an observant genius, and a relation to nature as well as a knowledge of art.

In the drama, life and thought, feeling and action, are mutually developed; and this is the great characteristic of a form of writing that demands a passional as well as intelligent sympathy with humanity. In Shakspeare this rare and indispensable gift reached its acme; but we scarcely think of him

as a dramatist, in the technical sense of the word, so much does he transcend the sphere of mere literary art in profound insight. It is his genius rather than his dramas—the soul of the man, not the skill of the playwright—that we habitually associate with his name; the spirit of his writings overshadows the form; their absolute meaning and interest far exceed the relative; and it is, therefore, not as characters in a play that we think of Othello, Juliet, and Lear, but as actual beings and types of the race. On this account, men of less comprehensive endowments, who have written successfully for the stage, afford better materials for analysis as regards the drama considered as a species of literature. The contemporaries of Shakspeare partook of his earnest courage, his Anglo-Saxon hardihood, in the free and distinct enunciation of passion and sentiment so characteristic of the exuberant life and rich mental activity of the reign of Elizabeth. We have but to open any of their plays, at random, to encounter phrases, descriptive episodes, and turns of expression that seem, as it were, to gush directly from the heart and brain of creatures with all the attributes of humanity fresh and strong within them. It is this vital beauty which redeems the extravagance and moral incongruities of the plots, exalts even mean situations, and causes the most despicable vices to wear a forlorn glory; avarice has a sensual glow, superstition imbibes a holy meaning, and arrogance becomes sublime. The luxuriant imagination of the author

atones for the poverty of the trait unfolded; and we are made often to forget the wilfulness of error and the sting of death, in the intensity of the sentiment that hallows them. Ford thus describes the inadequacy of Fame when Love is insecure:

"My triumphs
Are echoed under every roof; the air
Is streightened with the sound; there is not room
Enough to brace them in; but not a thought
Doth pierce into the grief that cabins here.
Here, through a creek, a little inlet, crawls
A flake, no bigger than a sister's thread,
Which sets the region of my heart on fire.
I had a kingdom once, but am deposed
From all that royalty of blest content,
By a confederacy 'twixt love and frailty."

And in another play, the simplicity of true passion is evident in Bianca's confession:—

"With shame and passion now I must confess,
Since first my eyes beheld you, in my heart,
You have been only king. If there can be
A violence in love, then I have felt
That tyranny: be record to my soul
The justice which I for this folly fear."

Perkin Warbeck, by the same author, adjures his followers, when led to execution, in this noble style:—

"Heaven be obeyed.
Impoverish time of his amazement, friends:
And we will prove as truly in our payments,

As prodigal to nature in our debts.
Death! pish! 'tis but a sound; a name of air;
A minute's storm, or not so much; to tumble
From bed to bed, be massacred alive
By some physician for a month or two,
In hope of freedom from a fever's torment,
Might stagger manhood: here the pain is past
Ere sensibly 'tis felt."

When the characters thus portrayed have

"Done all that smooth-cheeked virtue could advise,
And found all bootless,"

we may pity and blame, yet cannot despise them for yielding to temptation, when their language betrays such godlike earnestness. Illicit love is not without dignity when it holds such language as this:—

"*Gio.* What, changed so soon!
Does the fit come on you to prove treacherous
To your past vows and oaths?
"*Annab.* Why should you jest
At my calamity, without all sense
Of the approaching dangers you are in?
"*Gio.* What danger's half so great as thy revolt!
Thou art a faithless sister, else thou knowest
Malice, or any treachery beside,
Would stoop to my bent brows: why, I hold fate
Clasped in my fist, and could command the course
Of Time's eternal motion, hadst thou been
One thought more steady than an ebbing sea."

How true a portrait of the ideal scholar is the

description of Virgil by Horace, in Ben Jonson's Poetaster:—

> "I judge him of a rectified spirit;
> By many revolutions of discourse
> (In his bright reason's influence) refined
> From all the tartarous moods of common men;
> Bearing the nature and similitude
> Of a right heavenly body; most severe
> In fashion and collection of himself:
> And then as clear and confident as Love."

Cæsar's idea of his poem, in the same drama, is equally significant:—

> "Let us now behold
> A human soul made visible in life;
> And more refulgent in a senseless paper,
> Than in the sensual complement of kings."

In quite a different, yet not less effective manner is this dramatist's description of love, in one of his comedies:—

> "There is no life on earth but being in love!
> There are no studies, no delights, no business,
> No intercourse, or trade of sense or soul,
> But what is love! I was the laziest creature,
> The most unprofitable sign of nothing,
> The veriest drone, and slept away my life
> Beyond the dormouse, till I was in love!
> And now I can outwake the nightingale,
> Outwatch an usurer and outwalk him too,
> Stalk like a ghost that haunted 'bout a treasure;
> And all that fancied treasure, it is love!"

Sir Epicure Mammon's anticipation of luxurious enjoyment, upon the discovery of the philosopher's stone, is an instance of the wild sportiveness of imagination in another vein, and is so magnificent, that its selfish audacity is, in a measure, lost sight of. What pathos in Amintor's complaint when he finds himself deceived, in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Maid's Tragedy:"—

> "O, Evadne!
> Would there were any safety in thy sex,
> That I might put a thousand sorrows off,
> And credit thy repentance! but I must not:
> Thou hast brought me to *the dull calamity,*
> *To that strange misbelief of all the world,*
> And all things that are in it, that I fear
> I shall fall like a tree, and find my grave,
> Only remembering that I grieve."

And in Philaster, by the same poets, Bellario's description of his motive for assuming a boy's disguise is an exquisite picture, too familiar to be quoted. Chapman seems to have caught the very fire of Grecian literature; Marston has seldom been equalled in moral satire; Decker is an extraordinary instance of both the industry and the division of labour characteristic of these elder dramatists; and to Middleton's use of the witch—the English sorceress—has been attributed the wonderful supernatural beings that lend so weird an interest to Macbeth. Indeed, as a psychological and literary study, the individual traits of these remarkable writers, who, like the old

painters of Italy, stand alone in their triumphs, will throw more light on the mysteries of the soul and the philosophy of expression than any other department of English poetry.

Perhaps the most striking inferiority in these dramas to those of Shakspeare, is evident in their want of sustained power and consecutive interest. They differ from his masterpieces as his genius differed from that of other men; they are incomplete. There is often a mosaic rather than a fused and pervading beauty in them; but in single scenes, occasional dialogues, and especially in the best fragments, they are unexcelled in poetic grace and moral sentiment. The comparisons are sometimes remarkably true and vivid. In "Cupid's Revenge," by Beaumont and Fletcher, occurs the simple yet striking figure:—

> "As for myself,
> What I can say, you know, alas! too well,
> Is tied within me; here it will sit like lead,
> But shall offend no other; *it will pluck me*
> *Back from my entrance into any mirth,*
> *As if a servant came and whispered with me*
> *Of some friend's death.*"

In Fletcher's "Boadicea," Caratach exclaims:—

> "By heavens!
> I have seen these Britons that you magnify
> Run, as they would have outrun Time, and rearing—
> Barely for mercy roaring; *the light shadows*
> *That in a thought scud o'er the fields of corn,*
> *Halted on crutches to them.*"

Lovell asks Overreach, in Massinger's "New Way to Pay Old Debts,"

> "Are you not frightened with the imprecations
> And curses of whole families made wretched
> By your sinister practices?"

To which he replies—

> "Yes, as rocks are,
> When foamy billows split themselves against
> Their flinty ribs; or as the moon is moved,
> When wolves, with hunger pined, howl at her brightness."

In the "Fatal Dowry," written partly by this poet (who, without the stirring vehemence of his predecessors, has a lofty equanimity of tone often not less affecting), Charolois, in allusion to his father's death, says:—

> "My root is earthed, and I, a desolate branch,
> Left scattered in the highway of the world,
> Trod under foot, that might have been a column
> Mainly supporting our demolished house."

But the poetry of these dramatic writers has not alone preserved their names. The nobility of soul, and, above all, the recognition of self-sacrifice as a thing of course, gives a sublime and pathetic charm to many of the scenes and characters seldom equalled in any other species of literature; "all valiant uses" are regarded as "the food and nourishment of noble minds." Thierry demands of Ordella what the

woman merits who gives her life to secure a much-desired blessing to the king and kingdom:—

"*Ordel.* Only her duty, sir.
Thier. 'Tis terrible!
Ordel. 'Tis so much the more noble.
Thier. 'Tis full of shadows.
Ordel. So is sleep, sir,
Or anything that's merely ours and mortal;
We were begotten gods, else; but those fears,
Feeling but once the fires of nobler thoughts,
Fly, like the shapes of clouds we form, to nothing."

What a fine study of affection is this:—

"For know, loved fair,
I have read you through,
And with a wondering pity looked on you.
I have observed the method of your blood,
And waited on it even with sympathy
Of a like red and paleness in mine own.
I knew which blush was anger's, which was love's,
Which was the eye of sorrow, which of truth,
And could distinguish honour from disdain
In every change."

Here is a description of a sterner kind, yet not less effective:

"Ten struck battles
I sucked these honoured scars from, and all Roman;
Ten years of bitter nights and heavy marches,
When many a frozen storm sang through my cuirass,
And made it doubtful whether that or I
Were the most stubborn metal, have I wrought through,
And all to try these Romans. Ten times a night

> I have swam the rivers, when the stars of Rome
> Shot at me as I floated, and the billows
> Tumbled their watery ruins on my shoulders,
> Charging my battered sides with troops of agues;
> And still to try these Romans."

Thus tenderness and heroism alternate in these remarkable plays, embodied in the rich sentiment of Fletcher, the sublime pathos of Ford, the tragic horror of Webster, the grand repose of Massinger, or the scholarly robustness of Jonson.

From this prolific era of genuine dramatic literature in England almost to the time of Sheridan Knowles, there was a dearth of standard tragedies, although the theatre was permanently enriched by several admirable comedies. The spirit of the old dramatists appears to have undergone a long eclipse, and its lingering fire to have been extinguished with Otway. Venice Preserved and Douglas were almost the only serious plays of modern origin that justly kept possession of the stage. The exciting elements and literary activity of the present age has left its stamp upon the drama, but two causes have greatly tended to check its development:—the great popularity of the Italian opera, and the taste for works of fiction. These two representatives of life and passion have been carried to such artistic perfection, and have so fully explored both history and the records of the passing hour for material, that the necessity of theatrical composition exists in a much less degree than formerly; and the theatre itself no

longer constitutes the principal arena for literary genius and ambition. The examples, however, that late English writers have afforded in this department of letters, are worthy of the social refinement, the high culture, and the extraordinary talent of the age. The causes to which I have alluded, together with the revolutionary spirit and scientific discoveries that distinguish our times, not to speak of the greater interest felt in history, the fine arts, and contemplative poetry, have in a great measure withdrawn attention from the exquisite specimens of dramatic writing of recent date. At no period were so many dramas produced for the closet. Indeed the high finish, profound moral and rich poetic graces of the best of these writings have never been surpassed. They usually want interest of action, and are deficient in stage effect. Many of them are only poems cast in the form of dialogue, often too refined in conception and delicate in beauty for representation, and yet have attained a deserved and lasting renown as compositions to be read and pondered. Such are the Philip Van Artevelde and other dramas of Taylor, the Dream of Exile of Miss Barrett, the Paracelsus of Browning, and the dramas of Byron, Procter, Landor, Joanna Baillie, Croly, Horne, Mrs. Hemans, and others. Compare the most ineffective of these productions with the artificial grandeur of the dramas of Addison or Rowe, and others of the intermediate writers, and the superiority of the former, both in nature and poetry, is

at once evident. The two most successful living English dramatists, as the phrase is usually understood, are, doubtless, Knowles and Bulwer. The first learned the art of a playwright as an actor, and grafted on this practical skill that pure domestic sentiment so genial to an English audience; while the latter became an adept in exciting imagination, if not sympathy, by his career as a novelist. Byron's tragedies have his intensity without the variety of effect essential to the acting drama. They are only Childe Harolds in an imaginary character. The sweetness and fancy of the old English dramatists have been most happily reproduced by Barry Cornwall in his "Dramatic Scenes" and "Mirandola." Croly has best represented the Roman of the old English stage in his "Catiline." Shelley's "Cenci" is perhaps the most genuine English tragedy of modern times; the revolting nature of the subject unfits it for the theatre, but if to "excite terror and pity," to lose personality in characterization, and to observe the rules of art without forfeiting the inspirations of genius, are the main qualifications of a tragic poet, the "Cenci" realizes the claim. For sustained dramatic interest unfolded with the ancient simplicity, Browning's "Blot on the 'Scutcheon" is a remarkable work. Landor has been eminently loyal to his classic taste in his dramatic poems; and many single dramas, written by men engaged in political or professional life, on both sides of the water, in some instances as acting and in others as reading plays, attest the rich poetic vein and

earnest moral impulse of the modern drama, in contrast with the dreary interval chiefly known by one high-sounding passage of Congreve's Mourning Bride, quoted by Johnson, and one ridiculous one from Thomson's Sophonisba, parodied by the wits.

The despotic governments of Europe have cramped dramatic as well as other forms of literary development; but the drama, on the continent, has not been without its signal triumphs in the nineteenth century. Goethe's Faust, and Schiller's Wallenstein, have exerted a decided influence on contemporary literature and modes of thought. Even in Italy, Alfieri, with his terse and vigorous diction, has nerved the resolution of the lonely and baffled enthusiasts for liberty. His tragedies represent will, and those of Metastasio, sentiment. Devoted as the Italians are to the lyrical drama, it needs but the atmosphere of freedom to revive their inherent taste for tragedy. I have seen a Tuscan audience earnestly respond to the beautiful soliloquy of Schiller's Mary Stuart, when temporarily enjoying the breath of heaven to solace her captivity, and echo ardently the noble appeal of Paolo, in Silvio Pellico's Francesca de Rimini:—

"E non ho patria forse
Cui sacro sia de' cittadini il sangue?"

Niccolini has added some admirable tragedies to those of Manzoni and Monti—illustrative of his country's history, and prophetic of her hopes. The

involved plots of the Spanish drama, so significant in its intrigue and gloomy passion of the national character, are becoming familiar through the operatic librettos; and it is one of the eclectic signs of the times to find Calderon's invention embodied in a French romance, and grafted on the Germanic-Italian music of Verdi.

There is a certain diction and tone characteristic of genuine dramatic composition which at once reveals to both ear and soul the test of its merits. The imitation of these is equally obvious; and a genius for this peculiar kind of writing is accordingly best shown by a facility and aptitude in efficient dramatic expression, beyond the reach of art. We have recently met with such unmistakeable proof of the advent of a native dramatist, in the productions of Mr. George H. Boker. In the facetious epilogue of his Anne Boleyn, he anticipates the objections of critics to his temerity in following in the track of Shakspeare; but his play turns exclusively upon the queen, who, in Henry VIII., is a subordinate character. He has not only dramatized the fate, but depicted the very nature and individuality of Anne in a masterly and original view. The struggle between love and pride, the high intelligence, noble and warm heart, pure womanhood, and magnanimous soul of the royal martyr, are drawn and coloured to the very life. He forms a new and most effective creation, in some phases, reminding us of Schiller's Mary Stuart. The action of the piece is vitally sus-

tained; and the language rises often to the highest point of energy, pathos, and beauty.

In his Calaynos, also, we have a felicitous combination of the requisites of dramatic success. Its general scope is to illustrate the force of an intense national prejudice—the inveterate hostility between Moorish and Castilian blood. The local atmosphere incident to such a design, is preserved with remarkable consistency. A reader fresh from the pages of Prescott and Ticknor, at once recognises the literary, historical, and social traits of Spain, as depicted by these authentic chroniclers, in the imagery, and traditional and personal allusions of this fine drama. We see the old castle of the Spanish grandee, the ancestral portraits, the cathedrals of Seville, the mountain-ranges of the Peninsula, and all that is peculiar to that romantic country. But this truth to what may be called the national facts, is subservient to and illustrative of a still higher dramatic element—that of characterization. In this most difficult phase of the art, Mr. Boker has achieved a decided triumph. His characters are, to an uncommon degree, separate, individual, and consistent. Calaynos is an excellent representation of the higher qualities of the Spanish race. His earnestness of soul is in beautiful contrast with his wife's more vivacious temper. The loyal, dignified, and wise Oliver; the pert, town-bred Martina; the flippant knavery of Soto, and the reckless villany of Don Luis, are so distinctly and effectively drawn, as to constantly

yield the needful light and shade essential to moral impression. Mr. Boker has followed the masters of dramatic writing with rare judgment in revealing his characters indirectly. Thus Donna Alda and Soto suggest the character of Calaynos, not less significantly than his own expressed sentiments. The former says:—

> "Now, by some words his secretary dropped,
> And by the outward bearing of the man,
> I deem him one for noble actions fit—
> A generous mind, above suspicion quite;
> Yet with an eye that looks through outward things
> Into the soul, if once aroused to doubt."

And the latter, in surmising the character of his respected friend, says:—

> "I suppose
> A man much like my lord, of earnest mien,
> Of grave and reverend looks—incarnate wisdom
> Made manifest, and pure in earthly form—
> A man without a sin, or fault, or stain;
> Such must he be whom Lord Calaynos loves."

And elsewhere she thus describes the latter:—

> "He is a scholar of the strictest caste;
> And from the portal of yon study dim,
> Seldom comes forth, and then but for a moment.
> He is a man of grave and earnest mind,
> Wrapped up in things beyond my range of thought;
> Of a warm heart, yet with a sense of duty—
> As how he must employ his powerful mind—
> That drives all empty trifles from his brain,

And bends him sternly o'er his solemn tasks;
Things nigh impossible are plain to him;
His trenchant will, like a fine-tempered blade,
With unturned edge, cleaves through the baser iron;
Such is my lord, a man above mankind."

How finely is the natural effect of such companionship upon a vivacious, impulsive, but undisciplined woman, hinted by Donna Alda herself.

"Sometimes in the dead and hush of night,
When evil thoughts dare scarcely walk abroad,
When loneliness and fear half play the part
Of humble holiness, and force the heart,
Despite its wicked bent, to virtuous plans,
Some random word, which he, in passing, dropped
On the light fallow of my wavering mind,
Springs up and blossoms, with a promise fair;
But with the morning dew dries up the fruit,
And I laugh down, as weak and childish fright,
What, 'chance, an angel whispered in my ear."

The author of Calaynos has a poetical imagination, but he does not allow its phantasies to weaken the spirit or mystify the intent of his dialogue. On the contrary, the glow of his images is chastened by a noble simplicity, keeping them within the line of human sympathy and natural expression. In dissuading his wife from visiting the court, Calaynos adds, after describing its hypocrisy:

"Nor shall thy rustic mind,
Pure as the Guadalquiver, ere it flows
Past the foul sluices that Seville outpours,
Know aught of it."

After his betrayal, the deserted husband thus soliloquizes:

"The strife is vain; I cannot think nor read;
My mind will wander, and my eyes grow dim;
She clings to me like sin! I catch myself
Involuntarily, dreaming o'er the page,
And all my dreams of her. Day follows day,
Yet deeper sinks the barb. Each hour my heart
Like a calmed vessel next a hideous rock,
Heaves near this one idea."

The tragic writer is always in danger of sacrificing the bold, clear, metaphorical tones of real feeling, to a stately or exaggerated conceit; in his avoidance of this error, Mr. Boker emulates the older masters of his art. He also excels many gifted dramatic poets of the day, in a quality essential to the impressiveness, at least, of an acted play,—spirit. We quote an instance from the musings of Calaynos over his wrongs.

"I'd staked my soul upon her truth.
Ah, 'tis a trick, a trick—a trick to damn!
What shall I do? who shall direct me now?
(*Turns to the portraits.*)
I dare not question you, ye men of blood;
I know your answer—Draw the sword and kill!
Fling out the banner, fire the culverins,
Call in the war-bred from their ancient hills,
And let the trembling valley hear aghast,
Calaynos wars with man! O empty threat!
Blood cannot heal the scars which seam my heart.
(*Opens the casement.*)

The sky is red, is red as—blood!
Down, tempting devil, down—I will not murder;
'Tis the last print of evening's fiery foot
That burns in yonder clouds. Ere long, the night
Shall fall as black as memory on my soul—
O heaven! without a hope to light my path,
One stony hope to lend its guiding beam.
What dusky clouds o'erclimb yon eastern peaks.
A storm? Come on, I like thy looks, my mate,
Shake thy red lightning o'er this wicked world,
Strike all the guilty with thy burning hand—
Pour thy cruel hail upon their naked heads;
O'erturn their habitations, root them out—
Drive them, like sheep, before thy angry face!
Nay, let them go: slay all the innocent—
Slay all the sufferers, all that ache 'neath wrongs,
For guilt can live in peace and smile at them!

* * * * *

Thou hast a tale, shut up
Within the hollow chamber of thy breast,
To make avenging falchions bristle earth.

* * * * *

(*Snatches a sword from the wall.*)

Come forth, thou minister of bloody deeds,
That blazed a comet in the van of war,
Presaging death to man, and tears to earth.
Pale, gleaming tempter, when I clutch thee thus,
Thou, of thyself, dost plead that murder's right,
And mak'st me half believe it luxury.
Thy horrid edge is thirsting for man's gore,
And thou shalt drink it from the point to hilt.
To horse, to horse! the warrior blood is up;
The tiger spirit of my warlike race
Burns in my heart, and floods my kindling veins.
Mount, Oliver, ere pity's hand can hide
The bloody mist that floats before mine eye;
To horse! to horse! the Moor rides forth to slay."

Serenely alternates with these bursts of passion, the scholar's tranquil mood, and the philosopher's reverie. It was an exquisitely dramatic instinct that led the author to make Calaynos moralize so eloquently at the sight of the vast, bright firmament, at the very moment that the footsteps of the ravisher's steed echoed on his unconscious ear. To the tragic ability, we have thus briefly indicated, Mr. Boker unites aptitude for easy, colloquial, and jocose dialogue, such as must intervene in the genuine Shakspearian drama, to give relief and additional effect to high emotion. It is on account of his union of these various requisites, that we are disposed to hope for his eminent success as a writer for the stage in its nobler department; and this expectation has been adequately realized by the favourable reception, both by audience and critics, of Calaynos, in London.

The eloquent Satanic colloquies of "Festus," the discrepancy of opinion that dramatic poem excited, and the fame it achieved, is one of the most remarkable indications of that tendency of thought and feeling which, for want of a more definite name, we call transcendental. To the philosopher it is as characteristic a fact as the popularity of the comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan in their day. It has usually been thought that the drama, beyond any other form of literature, reflected the manners, tone of feeling, and character of an age. Except, in comedy, however, it is only indirectly suggestive to this extent. Molière and Goldoni represented the foibles and

social errors of their day, and thus led to their reform; but it was done under the light, penetrating, good-humoured style of the comic muse. The serious drama usually draws its materials from distant sources, aims to reproduce the past, and adopts a costume and spirit often far removed from the existent sympathies of the hour; but the sentiment it illustrates, the moral it enforces, and the artistic style it follows, reveal the taste of the period. If we analyze an approved drama, we cannot but obtain a glimpse of the spirit of the times that sustained it. It seems as if our own era required that a work of this kind should not only succeed in actual representation, but bear the test of refined literary criticism. Such has been the case, to a remarkable degree, with Sergeant Talfourd's Ion. Formerly the theatre was chiefly frequented by the illiterate, and only the few pretended to criticise the art there exhibited; but popular education has wrought such a revolution in society that the successful dramatist must not only win the multitude by his palpable effects, but gratify the highly educated with the exquisite beauty and refined significance of his language and imagery. In a word, he must combine scholarship with knowledge of the world, and genuine human sympathies with disciplined intellectuality, to please both audience and readers. But Talfourd's tragedy is not less characteristic of the times for another reason. It is the offspring of professional leisure;—one of those poetical waifs that sometimes mysteriously appear beside the loom of

plodding industry, and which the authors, as in the present instance, are scrupulous to disclaim as anything but incidental products, "not permitted to interfere with any professional or private duty." To be a dramatic writer by vocation would be almost impracticable now, so unreliable is the demand, and so inadequate the genius, if we except the French theatre.

At a casual view, we may detect no analogy between the English life of this age and the classic era in which the scene of this play is laid. We may ask what sympathy can be expected between an obsolete system of faith and a Christian audience, between John Bull and an ancient Greek, and what ideas of reverence we are expected to attach to objects of veneration which we know to be poetical fictions—exclaiming, with the poet,—

> "*Their* gods! what *were* their gods?
> There's Mars all bloody-haired; and Hercules,
> Whose soul was in his sinews; Pluto, blacker
> Than his own hell; Vulcan, who shook his horns
> At every limp he took! Great Bacchus rode
> Upon a barrel; and in a cockle-shell
> Neptune kept state. Then Mercury was a thief;
> Juno a shrew; Pallas a prude at best;
> And Venus walked the clouds in search of lovers!
> Only great Jove, the lord and thunderer,
> Sat in the circle of his starry power,
> And frowned '*I will*' to all."*

Yet even in this regard Ion is characteristic, not indeed of the external life, but of the Anglo-Saxon

* Barry Cornwall.

culture. It was the dreams of the author's youth, coloured by the association of classical studies, that kept alive the intention of writing a tragedy. He very appropriately dedicates it to Dr. Valpy, as one of the incidental results of his education. The scholar, the man of letters, whose taste has been rendered severe and chaste by familiarity with antique models, speaks clearly in this drama, and thus echoes a feeling common to all liberally educated Englishmen; but the most remarkable and characteristic trait is the union of humanity with classicism in this play,—the blending, in the same work of art, of Grecian form and outline with the romantic atmosphere, of pagan mythology and Christian sentiment. This typifies the eclecticism of the age. The names, places, ceremonies, forms of expression, belong to Greece; the spirit, tone, and imagery, are tinged with the philosophic humanity of Wordsworth, the psychological insight of Lamb and Hazlitt, and the self-sacrifice illustrated in the New Testament. Thus, foreign to the life of the passing hour as it may appear to the superficial, Ion exquisitely reflects the mental and moral experience of the times, in their more latent and refined aspect; and the genuine critic may read these "footsteps on the sands of time" by analyzing the play, as well as see the traces of the age of maritime discovery in the "Tempest," or catch glimpses of the age of Louis in Molière. The only difference is that, in the one case, the evidence is indirect, and, in the other, obvious.

We perceive, in this tragedy, how, in accordance with the more introspective and less adventurous life of the present day, the interest and the energy is made inward, meditative, and of the individual soul, rather than in the outward enterprise of the hero. So much is this the case, that its author deemed it too undramatic for representation; and yet we know that it excited both recognition and sympathy. A mere state of mind is thus rendered the centre of attraction; the motive power not the external manifestation of character. Talfourd calls it the phantasm of a tragedy, and in this very definition, appeals to the contemplative and metaphysical nature of modern existence as compared to the more robust activity of an earlier day. The old dramatists wrote plays to give utterance to fervid emotions; and, "in the lusty stealth of nature," the offspring was vigorous, though seldom refined; the author of Ion acknowledges that a dramatic end with him was a secondary motive; he chiefly desired to make it "subserve to the expression of some cherished thoughts." This deliberate choice of this form of writing, as a vehicle for private opinion and sentiment, exemplifies both the high individual cultivation and the absence of great dramatic genius. It would make one of the hearty, earnest play-writers of Shakspeare's day—who wrought out their creations to supply the exigencies of the theatre, and give scope to their burning thoughts—smile, to read, in the preface to Ion, the various motives that led to its

conception, execution, and publication. The calm purpose, the tasteful care, and the elaborate finish of the task would contrast strongly with their more necessitous, rough, and impulsive careers.

Another point in which Ion represents the spirit of the modern culture, is its abstract moral beauty. The great object of the classic drama was to infuse a human element into idealism; while the romantic aimed to render the human poetic; but in both, the effective display of fate, passion, and will, seems the great object. In the present age, however, deformed by actual error, no deliberate intellectual creation would be tolerated, unless the principle of moral beauty was recognised. In Ion, the absence of great passional interest, and a succession of thrilling events, is compensated by a heavenly grace of character. The romance of the play is that of instinctive virtue, for it is worthy of remark, that no overwhelming sentiment, or enthusiasm of valour, leads to the voluntary self-sacrifice of the hero; the purpose was not born of tumultuous feeling, as is so often the case in the early tragedies; nor of harrowing remorse or baffled love. It was a calm, religious, consecration; a conscious, reflective, and gradually matured resolve, ushered in by presentiments, and conceived, as it were, by the natural operation of a moral law. The pathos of the tragedy arises from the contrast between the sternness of such a fate spontaneously adopted, and the gentle, loving, refined being who is its victim. An interest like this would scarcely have

touched an audience such as luxuriated in the horrors of Webster, and were infected by the Broken Heart of Ford; and that such moral grace and quiet grandeur of soul should be made subservient to dramatic effect is an impressive proof of the advancement of civilization, and the increased development of both mind and sensibility. Ion is, indeed, a drama in which, through the medium of a classic outline and an atmosphere of humanity, the primal and higher sympathies are appealed to in language of poetic beauty and exquisite significance; and it is precisely because of these traits that it is a characteristic play, both in relation to the culture, the philosophy, and the moral sentiment of the age.

Accordingly, it is in the interviews and soliloquies, rather than in the moments of intense action, that profound elements of character are discernible in Ion. The purity and earnestness of his love is revealed in the beautiful colloquies with Clemanthe, where, by the genuine law of feeling, so much more is suggested than is spoken. His solemn energy of will, combined with the gentlest spirit and the lowliest self-estimation, are not less eloquently apparent in his appeal to the sages to undertake the perilous mission to the king; and his appeal to Adrastus to be true to himself and his people. So the magnanimity of friendship finds expression in the last dialogues with Phocion, and the holy beauty of filial love in the closing scene between the dying monarch and his recovered child. In the drama, an effect is aimed at which

essentially depends on the whole piece as a work of art. Quotations only indicate the rhetoric, the poetical diction and general style; it is impossible through them to convey any idea of the absolute dramatic significance of a play. The following disconnected passages from the mouth of the hero, will, therefore, only serve to illustrate the refined graces of sentiment and language to which we have alluded as characteristic of the modern drama.

Thou art not marble,
And thou shalt hear me!—Think upon the time
When the clear depths of thy yet lucid soul
Were ruffled with the troublings of strange joy,
As if some unseen visitant from heaven
Touched the calm lake and wreathed its images
In sparkling waves;—recall thy dallying hope
That on the margin of assurance trembled,
As loth to lose in certainty too blessed
Its happy being;—taste in thought again
Of the stolen sweetness of those evening walks,
When pansied turf was air to winged feet,
And circling forests, by ethereal touch
Enchanted, wore the livery of the sky,
As if about to melt in golden light
Shapes of one heavenly vision; and thy heart
Enlarged by its new sympathies with one,
Grew bountiful to all!

* * * * * *

O Sages, do not think my prayer
Bespeaks unseemly forwardness—send me!
The coarsest reed that trembles in the marsh,
If Heaven select it for its instrument,
May shed celestial music on the breeze
As clearly as the pipe whose virgin gold

Befits the lip of Phœbus;—ye are wise;
And needed by your country; ye are fathers;
I am a lone stray thing, whose little life
By strangers' bounty cherished, like a wave
That from the summer sea a wanton breeze
Lifts for a moment's sparkle, will subside
Light as it rose, nor leave no sigh in breaking.
* * * * *
Now all is stillness in my breast—how soon
To be displaced by more profound repose,
In which no thread of consciousness shall live
To feel how calm it is!—O lamp serene,
Do I lift up to thee undazzled eyes
For the last time? Shall I enjoy no more
Thy golden haziness which seemed akin
To my young fortune's dim felicity?
And when it coldly shall embrace the urn
That shall contain my ashes, will no thought
Of all the sweet ones cherished by thy beams
Awake to tremble with them? Vain regret!
The pathway of my duty lies in sunlight,
And I would tread it with as firm a step,
Though it should terminate in cold oblivion,
As if Elysian pleasures at its close
Flashed palpable to sight as things of earth.
Who passes there?
* * * * * * *
It is little:
But in these sharp extremities of fortune,
The blessings which the weak and poor can scatter
Have their own season. 'Tis a little thing
To give a cup of water; yet its draught
Of cool refreshment, drained by fevered lips,
May give a shock of pleasure to the frame
More exquisite than when Nectarean juice
Renews the life of joy in happiest hours.
It is a little thing to speak a phrase
Of common comfort which by daily use
Has almost lost its sense; yet on the ear

Of him who thought to die unmourned, 'twill fall
Like choicest music; fill the glazing eye
With gentle tears; relax the knotted hand
To know the bonds of fellowship again;
And shed on the departing soul a sense,
More precious than the benison of friends
About the honoured death-bed of the rich,
To him who else were lonely, that another
Of the great family is near and feels.

Contrast the tenderness of the youth's soul with the ferocious pride of the king, sublimated, as it is, by a kindred nobleness and poetry; in both, the imagery and diction are of the highest order:

"*Adras.* I have yet power to punish insult—look
I use it not, Agenor!—Fate may dash
My sceptre from me, but shall not command
My will to hold it with a feebler grasp;
Nay, if few hours of empire yet are mine,
They shall be coloured with a sterner pride,
And peopled with more lustrous joys, than flushed
In the serene procession of its greatness,
Which looked perpetual, as the flowing course
Of human things. Have ye beheld a pine
That clasped the mountain-summit with a root
As firm as its rough marble, and, apart
From the huge shade of undistinguished trees,
Lifted its head as in delight to share
The evening glories of the sky, and taste
The wanton dalliance of the heavenly breeze
That no ignoble vapour from the vale
Could mingle with—smit by the flaming marl,
And lighted for destruction? How it stood
One glorious moment, fringed and wreathed with fire
Which showed the inward graces of its shape,
Uncumbered now, and 'midst its topmost boughs,
That young ambition's airy fancies made

Their giddy nest, leaped sportive; never clad
By liberal summer in a pomp so rich
As waited on its downfall, while it took
The storm-cloud rolled behind it for a curtain
To gird its splendours round, and made the blast
Its minister to whirl its flashing shreds
Aloft towards heaven, or the startled depths
Of forests that afar might share its doom!
So shall the royalty of Argos pass
In festal blaze to darkness! Have ye spoken?"

The great service rendered by the higher drama, is the scope and incitement it yields to sentiment. Human life is so much absorbed by details, so overlaid with the material and temporary, so hemmed in by the prescriptive and conventional, that what we call the soul—that part of our nature in which reason and feeling coalesce, would be dwarfed or paralyzed did not nature and art afford occasional means of genial expansion. In the best tragedies we realize anew the dignity of man, the holiness of sorrow, the grandeur of will, the intensity of passion, and all the subtle and earnest agencies that compose humanity. Our sympathies enlarge from being thus, for a time, enlisted in a world beyond the narrow limits of self; courage is engendered by the heroic phase of life thus brought into view; the fraternal recognition of a common destiny, of impassioned conflicts waged in the heart, of weakness sublimated by fancy or patience, is another propitious and natural fruit. We are saddened and melted only to be exalted. It has been often asked why the artistic representation of suffering thus elevates the mind, while its actual view is

unendurable. Allston thus solves the mystery: "It is the high privilege of the artist to sound the depths of the heart; yet he may not even approach it, except through the transforming atmosphere of the imagination, where alone the saddest notes of woe, even the appalling shriek of despair, are softened, as it were, by the tempering dews of this visionary region, ere they fall upon the heart." Hence the charm of that solemn interest which genuine tragedy excites. Reverence and tenderness are both appealed to through the ideal exhibition of truth. The blood is stirred, the nerves are thrilled, and "tears are in their bed" at the momentary realization, in the mind, of heroism, nobleness, and what Mary Wolstencroft finely calls the epicurism of virtue—self-denial. The superiority of dramatic over the other forms of literature, resides chiefly in this intimate relation to our deep human experience. Its great characteristic is earnestness. "Inward liberty and external necessity," says Schlegel, "are the two poles of the tragic world." Shakspeare is confessedly the greatest name in this sphere; and one more and more appreciated as culture reveals the essential, and, therefore, lasting principles of nature from which his conceptions emanate. By first successfully blending the elements of the tragic and comic, he brought the drama nearer to life, or rather he brought life into the drama; the Italian novels, lives of Plutarch, and old ballads and plays, whence his plots were drawn, only furnished a convenient trellis for the prolific

vine of his genius to sustain itself. It has been justly declared of him, that his consciousness was his only requisite critic. In his day, the stage was everything, and the literature of the drama, as such, comparatively neglected. Now one of his most ardent lovers exclaims:—

> "Gods! who would grace yon desecrated dome,
> When he can turn his Shakspeare o'er at home!"

while the most exquisite of English critics has eloquently proved the impossibility of doing justice to the bard in the theatre. He has been studied as a psychologist, and is cherished sacredly as the poet of nature, to an extent that wholly sinks the playwright in the more exalted office of the greatest expositor of truth and beauty in all literature. Perhaps the musical and expressive resources of our language are nowhere so richly unfolded, as in dramatic literature. Blank-verse is the most effective form of the English tongue; the prolonged and sublime notes of the organ, and the dulcet melody of the flute and horn, combine in its euphonous development; and, cast in the glowing utterance of the best dramatists, and especially of Shakspeare, it often seems in itself an inspiration,—a style of diction whose tone and periods refuse to breathe what is merely ingenious, or of casual interest, and give expression only to what is true, noble, earnest, and born in the depths of the heart, or the spontaneous play of the imagination.

The Traveller.

BECKFORD.

ONE striking effect of the progress of knowledge and its application to life, is that the records of travel seem to have passed from the domain of wonder to that of taste and philosophy. It is with but feeble expectations of strange adventure or rare discoveries, that the modern pilgrim sets out on his tour; and few readers open his journal with the hope of learning what is quite new or marvellous. In fact, the scenes described, the countries visited, and the experiences undergone are, in general, too familiar to awaken surprise; it is the point of view whence they are regarded, the descriptive powers of the writer,—the talent and spirit by which he contrives to make them suggestive of new associations and ideas, that lends attraction to what would otherwise be a monotonous narrative. Unredeemed by such original treatment, this class of books seem destined to speedy oblivion. Among those, however, which have escaped this fate, through an inherent vitality derived from the vividness of the author's sensations and the faith-

ful, yet at the same time, elegant record of them,—although inspired by the most frequented countries, are the Travels of William Beckford in Holland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Romantic by nature and classical by education, he writes with the finish of a scholar and the freedom of an enthusiast. Independent in his circumstances, there is in his style a tone of observant leisure, which puts the reader into a quiet, receptive humour; and accustomed to the best social intercourse, a high-bred ease imparts to his letters both refined pleasantry and a cultivated air. Before leaving England, he had given evidence of his knowledge of and sympathy with Art, by the publication of a volume of "Memoirs of the Painters." Habits incidentally revealed, prove him to have been of the order of appreciative travellers; for he constantly sought for the picturesque in nature and the beautiful in humanity. He never passes a flower without affectionately noting its colour and perfume; "hazy promontories" are watched by his eye with rapture. If he visits an old cathedral he makes trial of the organ; and keenly enjoys, during a spring promenade, the "balsamic serenity of the air." Amid the wild crags of the Grande Chartreuse, he is "seized by the genius of the place," finds a knoll whence to observe, and goes there at sunrise and moonlight, in storm and calm, to study, with a zest that makes him unmindful of exposure and the flight of time, the phases of mountain, ravine, and firmament. "Lilies streaked with pink," silent nooks in a forest, where

"the rabbits sit undisturbed," a strain from Bertoni's Armida, a mass by Jomelli or an anthem by Haydn, —even "the soft and harmonious colour" of a straw mat by candlelight—find a place in his pleasurable experience, and are deemed worthy of emphatic mention.

The relation of character to art and of nature to expression is, at once, a subtle and inexhaustible theme; yet the question is often unimportant except to the curious analyst. If it were proved, beyond a particle of doubt, that Shakspeare was a deer-stealer, the fact would not lessen the tragic grandeur of Lear or the tender beauty of Romeo and Juliet; and the actual value of the inductive system of philosophy remains undepreciated by the mean ambition of Lord Bacon. The works of imagination and reason,—those which are invented or conceived by a process of thought, have an intrinsic worth dependent altogether on the artistic perfection or absolute truth they contain, so that Young's merriment, Scott's family aspirations, and Goethe's heartless amours, are quite as irrelevant to a just critical estimation of the Night Thoughts, Ivanhoe, or Faust, as would have been the consideration of Liston's hypochondria to the enjoyment of his comic genius. The case is, however, reversed in that department of literature which deals chiefly with fact and professes mainly to inform. Writings that are the result of observation have a very intimate and essential relation to character. The veracity and good perception of a wit-

ness are indispensable requisites, even to the interest of his communications in history, science, and travels.

Perhaps there are no books so identified with the writer's character as those of travel. His integrity of nature, the clearness of his vision, the fairness of his reasoning, his tone, disposition, and even his temperament, either fit or unfit him to report correctly; and the consequence is that, in the works of travellers, there is a measureless scale of reliability, from the statistical precision of Von Raumer to the absurd exaggerations of Baron Munchausen. In attempting to discover the moral prerequisites of a traveller, in the literary aspect of the subject, we have been impressed with the fact that all who have secured any permanent credit are men of decided modesty. Egotism seems to be as fatal to success in this kind of writing as in the drama and the novel; something of a kindred breadth and quickness of observation is needed by the tourist as of sympathy by the delineator of human life and nature,—a similar capacity to lay aside personality and become as disinterested in observation as the higher class of literary artists are in feeling; in a word, to lose pride of opinion in liberal curiosity and individual sentiment in philanthropic affinity. By this means alone does it seem possible to observe to any useful end. The poet of nature declares that her beauties are fairly revealed only to "an eye of leisure;" and it is certain that the abstract pre-occupation of the thinker and the imaginative wanderings of the visionary, incapa-

citate the senses from perceiving correctly the genuine aspect, laws and relations of things. In addition to this objectivity whereby the external is described as it is, there must be enough of the sympathetic element to awaken that interest without which an outline is alone secured. The traveller may see well enough, but unless he takes a decided pleasure in seeing, and has an impulse toward an intelligent acquaintance with nature, art, and man, for their own sake, their superficial and isolated phases are alone visible;—these he may report, but it is rather in the way of nomenclature than as living realities; while, on the other hand, if enthusiasm overlay and characterize his narrative, however pleasant the book may be, it reveals the author rather than the country he visits. Some very worthy people are unable even to appear interested in any topic except what directly or remotely concerns themselves; and when such undertake to write an account of their travels, it is astonishing with what ingenuity they contrive to bring the reader, at once, from Alps, Parthenon, or the gates of Jerusalem, to some private association, or reminiscence. A celebrated surgeon with large self-esteem, breaks off in the midst of a picture of a classic scene, to rhapsodize on the circumstance that his visit occurs on the anniversary of a successful operation he performed at home—with the details of which the reader is favoured in a lengthy episode. A traveller may, indeed, be pardoned who honestly makes his *specialité* a thread round which to crystallize his ad-

ventures. If he candidly sets out to explore a certain object, to pursue a definite aim, or to look at new scenes and people through the lens by which it is given him most effectually to see—we may accompany him or not; and if we do so, it is with the knowledge of what we are to expect. Indeed, however this class of writers may fall short of the ideal of a traveller in the universality of their minds, they often attain a deserved eminence as original explorers in a special domain. Thus in the pursuit of general science, Humboldt gleaned and published some of the most valuable results of his long and industrious life; while the geologist Lyell was hunting up strata, in this country, he was brought into such contact with the people as more judiciously to recognise them, than those of his countrymen who professed exclusively to study their character; and Borrow, while ostensibly distributing the Bible in Spain, secured an insight into the domestic and habitual existence of that country more curious and authentic than any preceding English traveller.

The relish, however, of travels written by men of great individuality either of taste or character, must depend upon our sympathy with them; and such are obviously not the best adapted to give us genuine pictures. The landscape is coloured by the hue of their mood or the image distorted by the warped mirror of their prejudice. We are conscious of an atmosphere and an influence emanating from them rather than from the society or nature they depict.

They make poems, romances, and comedies of their travels—not reliable and picturesque narratives; as exhibitions of talent and character they may be and often are delightful; as travels they are apocryphal and illegitimate. Such authors take the actual scenes as materials, as artists combine bits of landscape; and finally make a composition more effective, perhaps, but untrue to any existent original. The tour they record is mainly an exponent of their favourite idea. They journalize not for the sake of inducting other minds into the scenes around them, but to clothe those scenes with the tints of their own fancy, use them as a basis for their castles in the air; or render them unconscious yet inspiring recipients of the baffled hopes and aspirations for which their experience has afforded no adequate scope. The ideal of this romance of travel is Childe Harold.

There is no species of literature which is so dependent upon general knowledge for its felicitous exhibition as that of travel. All have felt, to a greater or less degree, how the interest of a scene is enhanced and the significance of a country deepened, when contemplated in the full light of science and history. The spirit of adventure, however, is rarely found united with great learning; the most successful explorers of physical fact seldom apply themselves habitually to books; and no two characters assimilate less than the traveller and the pedant; yet an ignorant tourist and an untravelled scholar lack essential means both of utility and satisfaction; and

it is in the writings of men whose lives have been divided between books and journeys, that we usually find that blended insight into life and lore which admits us faithfully into foreign scenery and customs. Antiquity, Nature and Society are the fields of observation revealed by the records of travel; and it is evident that to interpret these with any effect, there must be a basis of historical and scientific knowledge, and some familiarity with the principles of mental philosophy, to guide the inquiry and suggest the inferences of the traveller's mind; but these needful acquirements should enlighten, not interfere with, his personal experience; and be consulted as a chart when desirable, not confuse his perception of the present and the actual. A striking illustration of the necessity of a comprehensive grasp of mind and the inefficiency of mere genius in an author of travels, occurs in the case of the most original novelist of the age. As an observer of the details of life and the development of character in a familiar sphere, Charles Dickens is unsurpassed; yet among the countless tourists of this locomotive era, who have given their journals to the world, it is difficult to find one who has more egregiously failed in all the essentials of this kind of literature than the author of Pickwick. The reason is obvious. It is in describing the phases, not in analyzing the philosophy of life, that Dickens excels; his sympathies, though humane, are special; he can forget himself in drawing a character, but not while studying the tendencies of national phenomena;

he is better at dissection than combination, and far more graphic than profound. In a word, Dickens is rather an artist than a thinker; he is moreover a genuine cockney in his tone and scope; and through this lens—so limited in its range of vision—he undertook to survey two countries, the one from its future and the other from its past destiny, fitted to attract and baffle the largest intelligence. The flippant and superficial tone of his "Pictures from Italy," at once assures us that he was incapable of placing himself in any genuine relation to the spirit of art and antiquity—the spirit of the beautiful and the grand, that broods, like a sunset cloud, over that desolate yet lovely region; while the utter want of recognition of the true points of interest afforded by a new country like our own,—its political institutions, its material prosperity and social tendencies, and the absurd emphasis given to details of physical inconvenience and conventional traits, suggest a hopeless want of insight into great practical questions. Compare the view taken of America by this author, with that of De Tocqueville; or his tour in Italy with the poem of Rogers,—extreme comparisons, indeed, but useful in exhibiting the truth, that to interpret the actual, in a country, there must be the broad and keen glance and the extensive knowledge of the philosopher, or the ardent sympathy of the poet, to bring out the principles at work or the beauty diffused through its life and scenes. Observation and invention are quite diverse operations of the mind; and to exercise the

one to arrive at great truths and for the purpose of gleaning materials for art, are processes as wide apart as those of the architect and the landscape painter; in the one case, we hardly recognise the familiar material of which the structure is built, so original is its form; in the other, we behold an instant and just reflection—shape, hue, figures, light and shade, and grouping, all in just relation to each other and to truth; the one is ingenious, the other is practically true; the one is a magical combination of details, the other a comprehensive view of generalities; the aim of the one is to display effectively human character in the ideal; that of the other to investigate and unfold realities, either of present interest or past association. The novelist works chiefly according to principles of art; the traveller by the light of philosophy; and the shaping power of imagination so useful to the one, may invalidate the authenticity of the other. It is on this account that the travels of authors—unless they are critics or historians, are apt to blend fact and fiction so incongruously together. The observant, acute, pleasant, and companionable Montaigne, as revealed in his essays, we could have predicted would make a good writer of travels before the manuscript of his journey into Italy was discovered. To observe, record his experiences, and philosophize on nature and man, were his favourite intellectual exercises;—to think, not to create,—to see, not to imagine, gave him satisfaction. Enlightened curiosity, to which travel so agreeably ministers,

was his ruling passion; and he seemed habitually to regard life itself as a journey mainly endurable on account of what was to be seen by the way. Montaigne, however, with all his mental adaptation to this species of writing, lacked an important quality: his sympathies were not extensive nor quickened by any great faith or earnestness of sentiment. That feeling, which so eminently distinguishes the literature of later times, and which has transformed the knight-errant into the humanitarian, does not warm and expand his ideas; but he was remarkably clear-sighted, reflective, and fond of truth; and, as a spectator of human life, is so alert, communicative, intelligent, and honest, that we cannot but lament that its aspects and resources, in all countries, had not been opened to his cosmopolitan mind. He possessed that speculative turn of thought which renders new places, customs, and people continually suggestive. Not content with taking the reader along with him in his equestrian journeys, he sets him also on a track of thinking, and shows how delectable is the habit of eliciting from daily and even commonplace experience, hints for a discussion, a reverie, or the discovery of a law.

"Few persons are aware," says Dr. Clarke, in the introduction to one of his voluminous books of travel, "either of all the duties a writer of travels must fulfil, or of half the difficulties he has to encounter." The credit yet enjoyed by this author is, in no small degree, owing to the careful research

whereby he authenticated and illustrated his own experience. He was in the habit of citing classic, historical, and scientific authorities, refuting the errors of previous explorers, and adding the resources of learning to the fruits of observation. Important as such collateral light must be deemed, and desirable as all must consider such thorough integrity of treatment in any department of literature, we cannot but prize imaginative power equally, if it is only kept in abeyance where facts are described. For these do not constitute all the value of the records of travel; perhaps their chief interest to the thoughtful reader lies in a peculiar suggestiveness. Tennyson finely hints this in his expressive poem of Ulysses; who after saying

> "I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
> Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed
> Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
> That loved me and alone; on shore, and when
> Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
> Vext the dim sea: I am become a name
> For always roaming with a hungry heart;
> Much have I seen and known; cities of men
> And manners, climates, councils, governments,
> Myself not least, but honoured of them all;
> And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
> Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy"—

significantly adds—

> "I am a part of all that I have met:
> *Yet all experience is an arch where thro'*
> *Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades,*
> *For ever and for ever when I move.*"

It is this ability to elicit the ideal from the real, to look beyond the immediate and material, without distorting the perspective, that accounts for the continued favour which such travellers as Beckford enjoy. Many of his sketches appeal to the primal sympathies as well as to curiosity. Travel is one of the few resources which civilization has left the poetical instinct; and if somewhat of this is needful for the relish of an actual journey, it is still more so, when we follow a pilgrim's steps only "in the mind's eye"—to the "continuous woods where rolls the Oregon," or in deserts vast "fold our tents like the Arabs;" something besides mere literal or even graphic representation is wanted. Shakspeare, in his picture of Othello relating his adventures, recognises this office of sympathy and imagination, not to exaggerate the truth, but to make an auditor realize both the circumstances and the feeling they inspire. In the details of picturesque and sensuous as well as artistic enjoyment, Beckford observes this condition with taste and effect; and he does this without departing from truth. This charm is wanting to the affecting experience of Atala and Gertrude; for we cannot identify them with the woods of Florida or the valley of Wyoming, on account of the fanciful local particulars so different from the real scenes, which imagination has substituted for nature.

Americans are thought by foreign critics to excel as writers of travels; and the opinion is confirmed by the remarkable success which has so often at-

tended their works. Indeed, in scarcely any other field of literature, has the talent of this country been so generally recognised abroad; and this superiority appears to be the natural result of American life and character. With no time-honoured customs or strong local associations to bind him to the soil, with little hereditary dignity of name or position to sustain, and accustomed, from infancy, to witness frequent changes of position and fortune, the inhabitant of no civilized land has so little restraint upon his vagrant humour as a native of the United States. In the majority of instances, he has early grown familiar with the idea of travel from the emigration of his family or his neighbours, the mercantile voyages of a relative, the annual tour of his parents, or his own youthful visits to the distant abodes of kindred. The American is by nature locomotive; he believes in change of air for health, change of residence for success, change of society for improvement. Pioneer enterprise is a staple of our history; and so few are the old mansions around which cluster the home-sympathies of more than one generation, that they are regarded with extraordinary interest, and talked of as exceptions to a prevalent fact. The subdivision of property, the necessity that usually exists for the young American to carve his own way to prosperity, and the ambition of wealth and political influence, are ever active motives that impel him to seek his fortune or enlarge his ideas by travel. It thus happens that Americans move about not only with

more facility than other travellers, but with far less feeling of estrangement and reserve. They readily adapt themselves, from habit, to all classes of people; they do not hesitate to gratify curiosity; their enterprise is indomitable, and their desire to see, hear, and discover for themselves, insatiable. The public conveyances, in this country, are always in motion, and always crowded; hotel-life is genial to the multitude; leagues of railroad intersect not only metropolitan thoroughfares, but the solitary wilderness; and the mighty lakes and rivers seem to invite exploration, and be the predestined arena for steam-navigation. But not only do the economy of life and the extent of territory in the new world, train her citizens, as it were, to travel;—their temperament and taste also combine to make them tourists. Restless, active, and inquiring—with the instinct of progress continually at work, Americans almost seem to exist by virtue of movement, as the Orientals do by quiescence. Such an existence favours quickness of perception, however inimical it may be to contemplative energy. Self-reliance leads to adventure. The freedom from prejudice incident to a new country, gives more ample scope to observation; and the very freshness of life renders impressions from new scenes more vivid. Any one who has compared the temper and zest of Americans on the continent of Europe, with those of the travelling English, will be struck with this fact; and it is also evidenced by the partiality of foreigners to our

countrymen on account of the superior tact they exhibit in intercourse, their great tolerance of unfamiliar customs, and the more real and spontaneous interest they manifest in what is characteristic, however alien to their own habits. It follows, as a matter of course, that such travellers record what they behold with peculiar truth, relish, spirit, and fairness. They are, at once, the most unprejudiced and the most sympathetic lookers-on in the world; and when endowed with adequate expression, make the best reporters. Nearly as mercurial and far more reflective than the French, adventurers by nature, and more attracted by the old, the prescriptive and the beautiful in art from the comparative distance of these phases of life from their experience, we often observe somewhat of the difference between their sketches of travel and those of other nations, as that which obtains between a boy's enthusiastic account of his first play, and an old theatre-goer's critique on the last dramatic star. Much of this spirited tone is derived from contrast. It is the freshness of illustration incident to life in the old world and the new mutually unfolded; but it may also, in part, be ascribed to the simplicity of manners, the unwarped judgment, the keen vision, the ardent curiosity and honest zeal that so often characterize the American traveller. He goes forth unincumbered by the trappings of rank, superstition, or pedantry. He carries with him a spirit of independence. He has learned to see with his own eyes

and to think for himself; and has that fluency which results from varied social intercourse. Thus free and inspired, it is not surprising that things often wear a more clear and impressive aspect to his mind, than they do to the jaded senses and the conventional view of more learned and reserved, but less flexible and genial travellers. The impersonal fidelity of Stephens, the Flemish details of Slidell Mackenzie, the curious zest of Sanderson, the picturesque and spirited description of Hoffman, the artistic grace of Irving, and the De Foe-like narrative of Melville and Dana, are qualities which have gained them more readers than fall to the lot of the herd of travellers, who have lavished on pictures of the same countries more learning and finish of style, with less of integrity of statement and naturalness of feeling.

To realize how the prominent characteristic of a traveller dominates over his observation, and thus modifies the aspect of all he beholds, we have only to recall the impressions which the same objects make on different travellers. No country, for instance, has been more frequently described than Italy; yet a peculiar interest is attached to every good book of travels devoted to that region. The classical scholar prefers Eustace's Tour, which was chiefly written in the Bodleian Library; political enthusiasts delight in Lady Morgan's Italy; those curious in architecture affect Forsyth; the lovers of physiology relish Bell; and students of topography, Sir William Gell; minds imbued with poetry and sentiment, only find

their impressions recognized by Madame de Stael and Mrs. Jameson; while matter-of-fact people are sensible of no incongruity in making Mrs. Starke the confidant of their vigils amid the most hallowed scenes of nature and antiquity; those addicted to the marvellous forgive the exaggerations of Dumas, on account of the spicy adventures he contrives to meet with; and such as have a taste for verbal felicities, accept the imaginative pictures of Willis rather than the inelegant daguerreotype of Cooper.

But one of the most striking instances of the manner in which the records of travel bring out idiosyncrasies of character, is Fanny Kemble's Italian Tour, a synopsis of which will best illustrate our meaning.

Every ingenuous picture of a woman's mind is interesting, more so in the present transition state of the world than ever before, as many of the important questions at issue are involved in the position the sex maintains. There is the same agreeable vivacity manifested in this as in her former book of travels, and vastly greater maturity of thought. It is written with a characteristic want of method, and has no unity of design—as a natural consequence, perhaps, of the diary style, for which we confess a partiality. It gives freedom and scope of utterance, and atones for want of arrangement by superior freshness and spontaneity. The scenic descriptions appear to us the most effective parts of the book. The author has a vivid sense of external beauty, and an eye for the impressive combinations of nature. Her enjoyment

of the Campagna, of woodland excursions and the phases of the firmament, is aptly conveyed. She excites in this regard our sympathy, and awakens many pleasing reminiscences. Although she professes to know nothing of Art, her opinions on the subject are very confidently given. It is surprising that she invariably finds Guido "affected and weak." Did she ever contemplate his Michael triumphing over Satan? Certainly there is power as well as etherial grace in that picture. We cannot but marvel, too, that she recognises so little that is affecting in his Beatrice Cenci. The resistance of an evil destiny is, indeed, wanting, but the pathos of human suffering has rarely found so beautiful an exponent. In Raphael's Fornarina, also, had she but considered it, there is a heartiness most naturally captivating to a delicate mind from that principle of contrast which is the legitimate ground of true affinity, that explains the artist's attachment. Her preference of the scenery around the harbour of Leghorn to that of the bay of Genoa is another instance of perverse judgment, attributable, we are persuaded, to some special association. The anecdotes of the new Pope were the freshest items in the book, and possessed a vivid interest for all who indulge hopeful ideas for Southern Europe. His character and purposes seemed admirably fitted to herald a better day. The lamentable unpreparedness of the people for liberal institutions, renders it, however, absolutely necessary that their condition should be gradually modified. The light

must be accommodated to the recovering sight. Mrs. Kemble's speculative reveries on humanity in general and this country in particular, do not strike us as very original. She is doubtless right in estimating highly the prosperity and free arena existent here, and that the apparent destiny and present spirit of our nation do not coincide, is a truth which cannot be pressed too often. It is really amusing to notice with what a thoroughly womanish caprice, alimentiveness and acquisitiveness blend with romance in this "Year of Consolation." The Philadelphia market is described in a way that makes one's mouth water (for like all imaginative persons, Mrs. Kemble's memory has infinitely more zest than her immediate experience); she dwells upon those "sixty francs" which her wall-eyed *aubergiste* charged for a day's ride, with inveterate regret. It is quite evident, indeed, on all occasions, that she is one of those women of spirit who will not quietly bear imposition. Although we have admitted the earnestness of some passages, the verse scattered through the volume is in bad taste. Of the weakness or hardihood (whichever it may be) of giving such palpable expression to strictly personal feeling, we have yet to speak; but even as specimens of poetry these fragments are crude and inelegant, although sometimes redeemed by a fine image. The blank verse is not euphonous, and the rhymes lack artistic beauty. That Mrs. Kemble is susceptible of poetic emotion we do not at all question, but of the divine art she has practically a very

inadequate idea. Her prose, especially where evolved without any eye to effect, is far more creditable, and we earnestly recommend her to limit herself to its fluent and occasionally epigrammatic periods.

Some of her comparisons are quite unique, and in the phrases she coins, she apparently has in view literal fact rather than refined expression; indeed Mrs. Kemble, whatever other faults she may possess, is as little chargeable with fastidiousness as any lady we ever encountered. She is very particular and exacting in some things—"don't like liberties taken with nature," and is justly shocked at the "indecent curiosity" of Englishwomen pushing and staring amid the religious ceremonies of foreigners; but in regard to the use of language she evidently thinks it best not to be squeamish, so that she gives a vivid idea of what occurs. Thus she talks of the "hang" of a shawl, and of being cheated to the tune of twelve francs; of golden-skinned men and freely-shown legs; of stinking streets and nasty people; of having her bonnet stove in and her shins scraped. Occasionally this verbal independence leads to a quaintness and originality of expression quite graphic in its effect. We have heard many significant epithets applied to the yesty waves under a dingy sky, but Mrs. Kemble, we believe, first discovered that they were bilious-looking. The sun has been characterized by all the terms that poetry can suggest, and Tennyson went so far as to call his noontide glow shameless, but that was because it looked upon the unveiled

beauty of Godiva; it was reserved, however, for our fair traveller to discern something satirical in his glare. She compares the Roman aqueduct to the vertebræ of a huge serpent, and the church canopies to a four post bed, and speaks of the "waves of human absurdity," at the carnival, and the astonishing self-possession of Italian daisies. In her vocabulary, creature is the synonym of maid, and a gouty Frenchman is a wretch. Almost all things present themselves to her mind either under a dear, a horrid, or a devilish guise, so that without these adjectives, we know not how she could proceed with any facility.

It would seem to be no conscious violation either of good taste or self-respect on her part, to indulge in personal details, which, however appropriate to a friendly letter, become altogether gratuitous when given to the public. To note one's sensations and keep a catalogue of physical experiences may be of use to the student of natural history, or afford pabulum to maternal anxiety, but it may be doubted whether such communications have any abstract literary value. It is a tax upon the patience even of friends to listen to minutiæ of this kind; how egotistical to expect readers in general to sympathize with them! Mrs. Kemble is evidently of a different opinion. She is kind enough to inform us if she goes to bed dressed, and when her nights are sleepless on board a steamer from the vicinity of the wheel, if she leaves the deck for fear of catching cold, and how she likes her bath-room. We are en-

lightened with the interesting fact that at Valence she had a chill, and at Autun highly relished a perch dinner; that on the fourth of January her laundress, at Marseilles, brought home her clean clothes; that her bootmaker at Rome disobeyed her orders, and that her stays were filled with confetti at the carnival. She prayed, it seems, in one "dear little old church," and laughed immoderately in another. She came extremely near fainting twice during her "Year of Consolation," once from the odour of garlic at a diligence office at Rouen, and once from the "smell of dirty fellow-creatures" at the pilgrim feet-washing in Rome. Her green velvet bonnet was covered with white linen to protect it from the flour on the last day of the carnival, and the sight of a colony of spiders frightened her away from the catacombs. She saw her sister's children in their cribs the night she arrived, and dipped her hands in the Mediterranean and drank at the fountain of Trevi; but while in America and France, was constantly annoyed from "an insufficiency of ablutionary privileges."

But she does not stop here. Truly saith Emerson —"There is hope in extravagance, there is none in routine." Our gracious lady never does anything by halves; she always, as the western people say, "goes the whole figure," and having so obligingly played the confidential in all these little external matters, she does not scruple to initiate us into a thousand secrets, and communicate the most delicious bits of information, "caviare to the general." Molière says, of

woman, "c'est une animal difficile à connaître." Mrs. Kemble appears determined to lessen the difficulty by giving a complete insight into the idiosyncrasies of at least one specimen of the genus. She richly deserves a niche beside Montaigne and Rousseau for the number and variety of the facts of consciousness she has "set in a note-book," for the advancement of philosophy. Some of these are really extraordinary. For instance, the delicate, green foliage of fennel is indissolubly associated in her mind with boiled mackerel; the sight of a dry country parches her throat, and her eyes fill with tears at the morality and success of an English factory: she always feels as if she ought to be turned out of a church which she has not entered expressly to pray, and is very anxious to obtain the recipe by which horses' tails in France are turned up without a comb. Her passion for live water is irresistible. When the mouse-coloured oxen of the Campagna fixed their gray eyes upon her, she first comprehended the delight of listless inactivity. It irked her excessively to see coarse boots under the priestly vestments of the choristers. Her soul abhors turning back. She delights in forges; and the overcharges of the Italian shop-keepers quite disgusted her. The voluptuous refinement of a celebrated Venus proved very disagreeable; and the effect of coming unexpectedly upon a famous statue, was to keep her silent for a quarter of an hour! Two things excite her special wonder: one is, why everybody does not die at Rome—and the other, why she herself is consi-

dered a brave woman. She is remarkably cross when she is frightened. In the anticipation of instant murder, her mind is occupied in imagining what her father would think of it, and how it will seem to the children. The cupola of St. Peter's, and the Juno of the Ludovici palace, made her feel exactly as she did at Niagara. All her revelations, however, are not personal. She occasionally brings to light general theories equally original; for instance, she infers that the statue of Mars in repose was taken during his *liaison* with Venus, on account of its tender air, and that Americans would make political use of the facts of chemistry if it were possible. We are indebted to her for the interesting truth, that a female servant cannot be, by any possibility, both useful and amusing, and that the divinity of the Roman women comes no lower than their shoulders. She is of opinion that French politeness is more wordy than actual, and that females enjoy unexampled consideration, on the mere score of sex, in the United States. She also has found reason to consider a spittoon quite a desirable article.

The pleasing traits in the book, are the liveliness and glow of its descriptions, and the eloquent, though occasionally strained philanthropy it breathes. The objectionable feature is indiscriminate unreserve, a quality in print altogether inexcusable in a woman, and to be deprecated the more because the amusement it sometimes furnishes, as before suggested, tends to bring it into vogue. Physiologists declare

that the undue exercise of the mental organs in woman, by diminishing the activity of the vital system, gradually modify the distinctions of sex, and that the tone of feeling becomes masculine in proportion. This is morally true at least. Nature is no capricious mother; her laws are absolute, and everywhere and always she vindicates herself. The wild-flowers for which Mrs. Kemble has so genuine a love, never become fruit-trees; and yet that there is a meaning in their beauty, and a purpose in their existence, we have sacred authority, though "they neither toil nor spin." We can only account for the apparent inconsistency between her sense of the beautiful and appropriate in outward nature, and her insensibility to the same elements in actual life, upon the theory that refinement of character and of perception are quite distinct—that publicity of any kind blunts the more delicate of womanly instincts; and even superior endowments, by changing the vocation, neutralize the attributes of sex. "Genius needs a world-wide utterance," says Mrs. Kemble; and this may be true—but is it needful to give a world-wide utterance to private sorrow?—to open the sanctuary of the heart to the gaze of idle curiosity?—to furnish from the domestic hearthstone food for gossip; and make hackneyed all that is sacred and personal in experience and feeling, by claiming universal sympathy? Is not genuine sentiment too deep to be thus proclaimed? Woven in with this entertaining journal of a year's residence in Italy, are allusions

to private circumstances and affections, singularly out of place in a book of travels. These references are needlessly explicit, and evidence an absence of delicacy in remarkable contrast to the fine appreciation of violet clouds, pure fountains, and rich foliage, indicated in the context. The very title of the book is an indirect appeal; it seems like making literary capital out of personal afflictions—like coming before the public not as an authoress, but as a disappointed woman. Mrs. Kemble's views of this subject may be easily inferred from her remarks upon Goethe's conduct to his friends—the original Charlotte of his Werther, and her husband. We disagree entirely with her in thinking that private relations must be sacrificed to genius—that art has more imperative claims than justice, and that love and all its sanctities should be desecrated to ambition. It is owing to ideas of this kind that literature has lost so much of its natural dignity, and that its votaries so rarely enjoy that respectful social estimation which attends upon less abused pursuits. If the privacies of life are to be invaded—the candour of friendship betrayed, and even the heart's most intimate revelations appropriated as materials for authorship—the sooner an occupation which trenches so keenly upon self-respect, and the daily beauty of life, be resigned by the indiscreet, the better. A morbid passion for notoriety and a gross egotism, are rapidly making the world a vast psychological museum, and society a confessional, wherein human nature is profaned by the

broad scrutiny to which it is exposed. The great poet and artist draw from their inmost experience—but this is traceable in works of real genius, rather to the tone than the details, and is revealed by the strength of the under current, and not the sparkle of the wave. We cannot but infer, as we hear the touching symphony, or peruse the impassioned poem, that their authors loved intensely and suffered deeply; but the personal facts should be a sacred mystery, at least until death has canonized individual fame.

It is remarkable that in a department of literature so prolific, while books of specific interest abound, few have become classic. Perhaps this is owing to the fact that writers of travels are usually diffuse, and conciseness is absolutely requisite in a work destined to become standard. Two examples occur to us where a high finish and studied brevity indicate a classic aim which the general taste has subsequently acknowledged; these are the Sentimental Journey and Eothen. No two designs more in contrast can well be imagined—all the care in the one being lavished on atmosphere, and in the other on outline;—the former an epitome of feeling, the latter of thought. Yet the genius manifest in these popular books does not make them models. With all its sentiment, Sterne's journey is tinged with affectation; and with all its brilliancy, Eothen wants the softness and glow of the heart; and in both, we are not so much occupied with the scenes and personages described, as with the individuality of

the respective authors—with the light in which they robe what is before them rather than the object itself. These two examples, however, of the poetry and the philosophy of travel, have tended to impart dignity and significance to its records, which are apt to be the most careless prose compositions in literature.

The intelligent reader will make the same allowance for a predominant trait of character in a traveller's narrative, as he naturally would do for the same quality in a *compagnon du voyage;* and in this regard there is ample room for the exercise of individual taste;—the prevailing characteristic of Montaigne being liberal curiosity, that of Addison scholarship, that of Chateaubriand and Lamartine sentiment, of De Tocqueville political philosophy, of Goldsmith geniality, of Combe reference to the natural laws, of Sir Francis Head humor, of Inglis agreeability, of Kohl reliable information, and so on through the long catalogue of travellers. The same variety of taste may be gratified by the difference of subjects as well as of authors in the literature of travel. Voyages of maritime discovery and overland journeys to the Pacific, captivate those who love adventure; and this continent has afforded no small portion of this stimulating aliment in recent times, from the expedition of Lewis and Clarke, to the adventures of the Fur-Traders so gracefully narrated in Astoria. Travels in the United States specially interest political economists and philanthropists; in Italy the poetic, in Palestine the religious, in the Arctic zones and the

tropics the naturalist, in Switzerland the devotee of scenery, in England the utilitarian and lover of domesticity, in Germany the scholar, in France the social. Books of travels thus appeal not merely to the curiosity, but to the individual affinities of readers; and have the peculiar charm to awaken an interest common alike to the practical and the imaginative mind.

There are two distinct phases of the literature of travel and the qualities it demands are modified by each; they are adventure and taste,—the enthusiasm of discovery and the study of social life. The lives of early travellers abound in strange vicissitude, novel circumstances, and hazardous exposure; while those of modern are comparatively exempt from the interest which attaches to the idea of danger. It is evident that the love of adventure impels to quite different regions of the earth than that quiet pursuit of knowledge and luxury of observation found in the sphere of civilization. It requires a different species of character to explore new and wild countries from what is needed to analyze the art, science, or political tendencies of Paris, Rome, and St. Petersburg. When Marco Polo died, about 1323, his friends besought him to confess the history of his travels a fiction. The wonders he recorded are now familiar to every child; and the locomotive facilities and constant intercourse of the world are daily encroaching on the domain of the marvellous; so that the cleverness rather than the experience of travel-

lers is what renders their books attractive. The spirit of adventure, however, is an instinctive and permanent trait, and will always find scope, if not in discovering the new, at least in exploring the old. It is a form of heroism, perhaps the most unobjectionable to a Christian age, identifying itself with philanthropic ends, and yielding constant aliment to that divine fraternity that renders "the whole world kin." Unfolded in the annals of travel, with all the interest of a life-drama, it draws us, through admiration, sympathy and inquisitiveness, near the heart of nature and humanity. We ardently recognise its inspiration in Bruce triumphant at the source of the Nile, Belzoni undismayed in the darkness of Egyptian tombs, half-suffocated with the dust of mummies; Della Vallè romantically espousing a daughter of Bagdad; Ledyard flying from the restraints of a New England college, and working his passage to Europe as a common sailor; Brydone noting his barometer among the lava and snows of Etna; Catherwood draughting the forest-covered ruins of Yucatan; and yet more recently, Layard watching the exhumation of a winged lion of Nineveh; an American naval officer guiding his frail bark over the rapids of the Jordan; and another giving out rations of mule-flesh to his little band of frozen comrades in a defile of the Rocky Mountains. Endurance related with simplicity, discovery revealed with modest zeal, the resources of patience, fortitude, and intelligence displayed without ostentation, sometimes render the

works of such travellers the most beautiful tributes to human character, and more interesting than the wildest romance. Even the scholar is charmed with the vitality of the information they yield; and Southey, a discriminating bibliopole, used to say that of such books, "we cannot have too many."

A critique, attributed to Goethe, prefixed to the travels of Puckler Muskau, refers their attraction to a "genial aimlessness." This is, indeed, the spirit which renders a tour pleasurable both as an experience and a history, except when undertaken, like those just alluded to, from motives of bold enterprise; and in this view Beckford's Travels may justly be considered as one of the best illustrations of our subject. He combined, in a very remarkable degree, the sagacious philosophy of a man of the world, with the refined enthusiasm of the scholar; he possessed a fund of exact knowledge and a temperament of rare susceptibility; he united the keen perception of a critic to the *abandon* of a voluptuary; and thus was brought into relation with nature and life in, at once, an exquisitely intimate and objectively intelligent way, and thoroughly realized the influences of each with the senses and with the mind. Without the hardihood and earnestness to become a purely adventurous traveller, and too exclusive to sympathize with human nature on a broad scale, by virtue of an enjoyable organization and a highly cultivated taste, he was fitted to interpret the mental and physical luxuries of a southern and oriental existence, without

losing the spirit and judgment of his Anglo-Saxon nativity and education. That stock has produced the most efficient travellers in the world, but a constitutional insensibility has often deprived the story of their wanderings, of the glow and consecutive sentiment which alone brings home another's experience to our consciousness. They have usually been endowed with the needful intelligence and energy, but seldom with the moral and physical sensibility whereby we "see into the life of things." Beckford early indicated a different order of character, by his romance of Vathek, originally as unchastened as it was imaginative, yet so authentic in costume, so beautiful in descriptive effect, as to prove how wonderfully a native of the West, through imagination and sensibility, could adopt and reproduce the magnificent and sensuous life of the East. Subsequently this capacity for pleasure appears to have sapped his intellectual vigour; and he is chiefly remembered as having lived in regal splendour at Cintra and become the mysterious virtuoso of Fonthill Abbey, the architect of innumerable towers, the owner of rare old pictures, and the inventor of extravagant diversions rivalling the magic felicities of the Arabian Nights; —an Englishman of the nineteenth century realising in his nature, his wealth, and his experience, an oriental destiny. Yet however deplorable tendencies like his may be when recklessly indulged, ere they were perverted by habit, we can scarcely imagine a more desirable natural gift for the traveller. His

sensitive and discriminating mind revelled in every form, hue, odour, movement and sound that addressed the sense of the beautiful; and analyzed every combination of their enchantment. The effect was that the offensive to taste yielded him inexhaustible occasion for banter, and the delightful in art or nature, while it captivated for the moment, also afforded material for tasteful comment. Hence the whole thread of his narrative is varied by a contrast analogous to what all travellers have actually known, —the discomforts of the real and the charm of the ideal; his facts are enlivened by fancy; and his descriptions not only convey a series of images, but they have the unity of impression which is derived from sensation. In a word, he not only tells us how things appear to him and how their phenomena may be explained, but how they make him feel. This gives a personality as well as a reality to every scene; we identify ourselves with it;—inhale the breeze, scent the flower, behold the tints, taste the viands, and hear the strain, are annoyed by the inconveniences and charmed with the amenities of the traveller's daily course. It is his union of an eye for the picturesque with a soul for the practical that gives to Beckford's travels their consistent effect. They were written in the freshness of his years, and just at that point of time when the transition from an ancient *regime* to modern reform had commenced. One of the latest and most vivid reflections of Europe, before the "ineffectual fires" of prescriptive custom and

authority grew dim before the star of conquest and the dawn of popular intelligence,—they are graphic and affecting memorials of the past in form and manners, and the eternal present of nature in her fairest guise.

No susceptible mind can follow the enthusiastic pilgrim without catching the spirit of his experience; —feeling with him the somniferous aspect of the Low Countries, and revelling in the mellow brilliancy of southern lands, the charm of luxuriant vegetation, and the pensive beauty of cypress-groves and minsters. Infected by his humour we smile at the absurdities of local prejudice and vulgar enjoyment; lulled by his dreaminess, we repose in the shade of a chestnut tree, or the gloom of a chapel, and muse of departed greatness; animated by his fancy, we re-summon victorious processions on the desert plains of Rome and in the oriental square of Venice. To describe thus general effects and minute details, with equal spirit, is only the gift of one who to an artist's perception adds a poet's sensibility. Beckford saw the dew-drops on Van Huysam's flower-pieces, the gaudy insect that fluttered in his mountain path, the anemone that peeped out from the grass, with the appreciative glance of a dainty virtuoso; but he saw also the massy foliage of Vallambrosa, the expanse of the Mediterranean, the sublime in architecture and the infinite gradations of tint on the evening horizon, with the meditative gaze of a bard, to whom each was a glorious revelation. He recognised, too,

the ludicrous side of a traveller's life—the "squalling battery" adjacent to his inn chamber, the "clumsy lubber decorated with stars," the soprano who looked like a porpoise, the "rat's tail candles" of a gala, the overgrown friars "such as a Chinese would have placed in his pagoda," and the "grim fraternity of cats." He was a haunter of woods, a lover of the rustling of pines, an equestrian, and a swimmer; the *sbirri* in St. Mark's Square thought him mad, soliloquizing by moonlight; and on his first visit to the Florence gallery, he "ran childishly by the ample ranks of sculptures, like a butterfly in a parterre, that skims before it fixes, over ten thousand flowers." He clambered hill-sides to pluck *gli odoriferi ginepri* mentioned by Ariosto; wished to scatter coral on Sannazzaro's grave at Naples; and eat grapes while reading Metastasio; he luxuriated in sleeping figures, through a relish of the drowsy god as epicurean as Sancho Panza's was material; and while strolling in the Boboli gardens, expected Lucullus to invite him under a portico to dine. He sought to realize the poetry of travel by contrast, going from the dark cathedral to the bright casino, from gay society to "wild spots where the arbutus flourishes;" and from the noisy mart to the lonely sea-shore. It is this delight in a free exposure of his nature to the influence of external objects, this studied contact with the elements of life, this passion for atmosphere and hues, for the beautiful and grand; this education of the senses as avenues of the soul,—that makes such a

mind as Beckford's a delectable guide through scenes of natural and artistic interest. As a convivial host is required to give zest to the feast, so a traveller of sympathetic temper is the only one who can impart to others the pleasure which novel circumstances and visionary delights yield himself.

The Critic.

HAZLITT.

THE great modification in criticism is that which has transformed it from a science to an art. The very term originally conveyed the idea of dissection and analysis, of a test applied to the different parts of a book or a picture, whereby their comparative excellence might be duly judged. He was a good critic who most quickly detected an error in perspective or syntax, an ill-measured line or an incongruous metaphor in poetry, or a defect in the logic of an argument. His office was ungracious, pedantic, often querulous. "To pry into abuses" was its end and aim. An almost Gothic rudeness marked his invasion of the realms of taste; and he seemed actuated by the ignorant curiosity of the savage, when taking to pieces a work of genius, and mocking at what he deemed its faults. Then criticism, at best, was verbal, one-sided, and narrow; now it is liberal, generalized, and comprehensive; then it was merely destructive, now it is essentially creative; once the function of second-rate and disappointed authors, it

has become the pride of the successful and the gifted: from a dry and technical catalogue of blemishes, it has grown into an eloquent exposition of the principles of truth and beauty. The cause of this revolution is to be found in the more refined cultivation and humanity of the age. Reverence for the genuine emanations of wisdom, and sympathy with the higher developments of mental power, lie at the basis of the change. The leading spirits of the century have united in advocating *recognition* in place of *interference* as the means of ascertaining the intrinsic value of artistic and literary productions. Instead of a facility in detecting microscopic errors, the quality now considered most important in the critic is that of placing himself in relation with the artist and poet, entering into his experience, and prolonging the note first struck by his master-touch, that it may go farther into the universal heart and linger more distinctly on the common ear. The influence of German literature and the establishment of the British Reviews have tended greatly to promote this reformation. The former, by appealing to human consciousness instead of abstract rules, elevates the criterion of excellence in works of art, from an external standard to an inward law. It has made evident that knowledge alone, however extensive, is not the only requisite of appreciation,—that there is an intuitive criticism in which the individual heart has a share as well as the "meddling intellect;" and that it is indispensable to the complete

enjoyment of any product of the mind that it shall be felt as well as understood. Hence the authority of the elder critics is no longer infallible. We discriminate between their opinion of what they were capable of relishing, and what is beyond the sphere of their sympathy. Thus Dr. Johnson's disparagement of Milton and Collins is unregarded; while his parallel between Pope and Dryden is yet esteemed for its critical justice. Jeffrey's original condemnation of Wordsworth has lost all significance, while his praise of Campbell and Scott—poets nearer his own idiosyncrasies,—continues authentic. Perhaps the chief benefit which has resulted to English literature from the advent of the "Edinburgh" and its rivals, next to the speedy annihilation of literary pretension, has been the daring tone and fearless spirit which were thence infused into our modes of thought and expression. While they operated like an electric shock upon elegant imbecility of style, they at the same time induced a bold scrutiny and hearty appreciation in criticism. The ferocious onset excited chivalrous sentiment. Talfourd put the soul of youth into his defence of the author of the Excursion; and Coleridge lifted him to the aerial heights of contemplation for trial among his peers, and reversed the verdict of that lower court which had proved itself so inadequate to the cause it assumed to judicate.

Doubtless the change we have noted has led to extravagance. There is often an overstatement and

special pleading in the brilliant essays of the Quarterlies. Each writer puts forth too much of his energy in one direction. Sydney Smith, when he begins to ply his artillery of wit, is not satisfied with a "a palpable hit," but goes on until he fairly demolishes an absurdity, and knocks away every bulwark of cant and assumption. Macaulay, in his rhetorical enthusiasm, loses sight of the discrimination which should guide the pen of criticism. He allows no redeeming trait or semblance of one to the character of Barère—and scarcely admits a human defect in that of Milton. Yet for such exaggerations the intelligent reader instinctively makes the needful allowance; and they do not essentially derogate from the vast superiority of modern criticism. The current literature of the day amply justifies the highest estimate both of its richness and vitality. How effectively has Carlyle illustrated the heroism of manly authorship, and the native power of true genius in his critical estimates of Johnson and Burns; Lamb, the psychological interest of human life in his exposition of the old English drama; Hunt, the epicurean delights of literature in his genial comments upon household favourites; Mackintosh, the successive theories of speculative minds in his sketch of the progress of ethical philosophy; Burke, Reynolds, Fuseli, Allston, and Ruskin, the principles of art in its relation to the sense of the beautiful and the true in the nature of man! Such instances might be indefinitely extended. They sufficiently illustrate

how noble, benign, and vast has become the office of criticism; how it is associated with the welfare not only of literature and art, but with human progress and the advancement of truth. Such writers are rather interpreters between life and its artistic representation, between the mind and its divinest fruits, —nature and man, than critics. They bring an intellectual and moral sympathy to the illustration of genius akin to itself; a clear and direct perception to the countenance of truth as vivid, serene, and reliable as its own expression. A kind of professional narrowness of purpose is, indeed, sometimes evident in many of the contributions to these famous journals by legal men. Jeffrey arraigns Swift with the judicial severity of a prosecuting officer, and pleads the cause of his own poetic creed against some of the most gifted bards of the age, with the shrewdness and ingenuity of a practised lawyer—a mode utterly at variance with themes and characters so far removed from the atmosphere of the tribunal. The most liberal and benignant of these critical writers is Mackintosh: his views were broad, his knowledge extensive, and his sentiments generous; but for candid, scholar-like disquisition, taking calmly into view the entire character and labours of the leading writers of the century, and sketching their career with truth and eloquence, the biographical essays of Lord Brougham are unsurpassed. Many of them are exemplars both of criticism and style. Gifford's presumption and brutality has long since

consigned him to the same rank as that of Dennis and other malignant defamers of genius; while the oracular tone of the anonymous and the shameless unfairness of the partisan reviewer, no longer exert that spell over public opinion, that once made young bards writhe and parliamentary orators tremble with impotent rage. The very extremes of critical abuse and laudation, and the array of talent which the last fifty years has enlisted in literary discussions, have been productive of wide enlightenment; and the spirit of justice and love, as well as the charms of wit and rhetoric, are now essential to the popularity of criticism.

Hazlitt possessed, in an eminent degree, what we are inclined to believe the most important requisite for true criticism,—a great natural relish for all the phases of intellectual life and action. This quality atones for a multitude of deficiencies; for it admits the critic into the heart of his subject, and makes him in earnest in its discussion. There is scarcely a page of Hazlitt which does not betray the influence of strong prejudice, a love of paradoxical views, and a tendency to sacrifice the exact truth of a question to an effective turn of expression. The exigencies of literary, and the animosities of political life soon rendered his temper irritable and his moods gloomy, —a result aggravated by an extremely sensitive temperament and irregular habits; and to this we must refer a certain bitterness of tone, and an occasional petulance and acrimony in his portraits of contempo-

raries, and even in those critical views of a more general kind, that were uttered on paper, at times of disease, misanthropy, or need. Such drawbacks to the candour of almost any other writer, in a department of letters peculiarly demanding tranquil and just investigation, would be fatal to authenticity. Such, however, was the native appetite for truth, such the intense love of beauty, such the fine combination of the sensuous, the imaginative, and the purely intellectual, in the character of this remarkable man, that we know of no critic who so thoroughly imparted to others the sense of his own enjoyment of genius, and made known the process of it, with such marvellous success. It is to this we ascribe his popularity with the young, and the new spirit he infused into the criticism of the day—of the best school of which he is justly considered the founder. In adopting Hazlitt as a type of the critic, therefore, it is not because his opinions are always reliable, his judgment unbiassed, and his taste immaculate; but because, on the whole, his appreciation of literature and art is more wide, discriminating and earnest, than that of many who, in certain particulars, are vastly superior. The latter trait is one of the rarest and most valuable. Formerly criticism implied the absence of enthusiasm;—a cool survey and patient nomenclature. Hazlitt and his fraternity demonstrate that the way to comprehend a work is to enjoy it, and that just perception is closely allied to sympathy. As we read the glowing tributes to the elo-

quence, poetry, and artistic talent which Hazlitt has bequeathed, follow his refined analysis of character, and mark the subtle distinctions whereby he separates the resources of nature from the tricks of artifice, we forget his partiality and vindictiveness, his hap-hazard assertions and careless style, in the delight of sharing in the keen relish and profound admiration of the painter, the bard, and the orator, over whose gifts and graces his soul appears to brood with such exquisite pleasure. We recognise the mystery of that vital genius that can make a world partake of its own existence; we awake to a fresh conception of the glory of mental triumphs and the blessedness of those higher sources of gratification which are overlaid by material life. We are conscious of the unity between to know and to love,—that the one illustrates the other, and that both are indispensable to the noblest criticism,—that which inhales the very atmosphere, seizes on the elementary principles, and discerns the most distant relations of genius in art, and literature, and action.

The boldness of Hazlitt is captivating. He seems persuaded that faint heart never won truth any more than fair lady. In a measure, this intellectual hardihood is owing to his speculative turn of mind, which ranged over books, galleries of art, landscapes and society, with the freedom and insight of an untrammelled thinker; but in part, also, it may be traced to early influences and associations. No situation is more favourable to habits of mental independence

than that of a youth whose family are identified with a proscribed sect in politics or religion. To think for himself, to cherish and defend his opinions, to preserve the right of free judgment, are the first lessons impressed on his plastic mind. Hazlitt's father was a Unitarian clergyman, and the social circle familiar to his boyhood was made up of gifted dissenters. He was accustomed to hear grave discussions carried on with spirit and intelligence, to dip into literature at random, to take solitary and thoughtful walks, and to encourage introspective habits favourable to metaphysical discernment. To this desultory yet inspiring culture may be referred many of his faults and merits;—the lonely zeal with which he clung to theory, the tenacity of his youthful memories, the ardour of his literary partialities, and, especially, the aspirations after ideal perfection which neither misfortune, error, or perversity ever quenched. His chosen pursuit was that of painting, for which, through life, he manifested a singular love; but his executive power was so far below his conceptions, that after studying for months in the Louvre, he unwillingly abandoned the easel for the pen. We can readily understand how a man of such exquisite nervous organization and impassioned nature should long for the tranquillity of art as the most available and healthful vent for his intense consciousness; and one of the most characteristic of his essays is that in which he so ably compares the professions of artist and author. This

instinctive fondness for art was a great aid to Hazlitt as a critic. It clearly revealed to him the conditions of literary production, made more definite the boundary that divides real genius and mere skill in writing, and accustomed him to look at a poem, a speech, or a play, with reference to its tone as well as its language, its spirit and truth to nature as well as its accuracy and cleverness. An analogy has long been admitted to exist between the two vocations; both involve similar laws of expression and principles of taste; and the advantage to a critic of literature of artistic knowledge may thence be easily inferred.

The controversial experience of his youth, and his intercourse in manhood with the most accomplished and original minds, gave not only facility to his power of expression, by enriching his vocabulary, but induced quickness of inference, discursive illustrations, and, especially, that pungent vigour and brilliancy that often render his lectures and essays a remarkable union of the colloquial and the didactic in style. Thus, from the study of art, he derived the picturesque element, and from society the genial vivacity which combine to give their peculiar life and freshness to his criticisms. He dilates on an author or a painter as a living reality, and as though he had just parted company with them, and not only carried away his mind full of their ideas, but his frame charged with their magnetism, which seems to glide from his fingers as he writes, and scintillates

with every dash of the pen. Hence the great individuality of his portraits, the familiar air of his communications, and the intimate companionship which his discussion of favourite subjects evinces.

The freedom of Hazlitt's comments upon living authors, both in the journals and lecture-rooms, has often given offence to delicate minds; his political antagonists have repudiated his authority with scorn; and men addicted to the merely artistic and timid phases of literature, seem too much disconcerted by his intrepidity of thought and style to endorse his claims to admiration. To these causes we ascribe the somewhat inconsistent reputation he possesses. It is the natural consequence of originality. If we trace, however, the history of English criticism, we shall find that with Hazlitt began a new era; and whatever may be our opinion of his estimates of individual writers and artists, it must be conceded that his method of treating their productions—that is, with fearless and sympathetic reflection—is an immense advance upon the prescriptive and technical course once in vogue. Indeed, Hazlitt deserves to be considered a reformer in criticism; and at a period when this branch of literature has risen to such importance, this implies no ordinary merit. The utility of appreciative minds is seldom recognised; to interpret is thought to demand far inferior powers than to create; and yet, when we reflect that works of genius demand a concentrated attention which only thinkers can bestow; when we re-

member how dull are the sensibilities of the multitude, and how absorbed they are with the immediate and the temporary: we must admit that the shrines of genius would be neglected but for the priests before the altar, and the streams of truth unfrequented did no angel of sympathy trouble the waters. Paradise Lost was only read by scholars until Addison pointed out its sublimities; Carlyle and Mrs. Austin introduced German literature to the English; Schlegel revealed Shakspeare to Germany; a lectureship was founded centuries ago to illustrate Dante; and the spirit of our own age is most significantly reflected in its criticism.

A striking trait of the best modern criticism is a certain reproductive intelligence, that seems to fuse into new and more impressive combinations the elements of every subject. The amount of positive information in the literary histories of Tiraboschi, Sismondi, and other chroniclers of national literature, of itself redeems their critical labours from a secondary value. The divergent streams of thought, the latent analogy of language, the gradual rise and progress of the literary development of a race, from the crudest ballad to the most finished drama, are problems that involve a degree of research and philosophy which only the highest order of minds can fully exercise. But even in the minor and isolated specimens of criticism, the offspring of the modern review, we often find that the writer has explored carefully every available source of knowledge, and

that his article not only sagaciously estimates the particular book under notice, but remoulds and revivifies the subject itself by new facts, principles, and illustrations, blended, by an efficient rhetoric, into a masterly exposition. It is therefore unjust to sneer at the age as more critical than productive, because the creative and analytical now unite their forces, and mutually give birth to discussions on society, art, literature, and politics, which nominally appear as criticisms,—a word that has now quite eclipsed its original signification. Any volume of the British essayists of the present century will justify the scope thus assigned to the office of critic. Each seems to have completely grasped a particular subject and become its recognised expositor. Thus Southey has illustrated Methodism, and Stephens Catholicism, with the knowledge of theologians and the liberality of philosophers. At no period, indeed, have so many enlightened minds attained a disinterested position; and hence the freedom and spirit of popular criticism.

There is one characteristic of the genuine critic apt to be disregarded by superficial inquirers, yet absolutely essential, and possessed by Hazlitt in an eminent degree. It is that psychological tendency and habit of introspection through which we become cognizant of the operations of the mind and the influence of nature and literature, art and life, on the soul. Thus criticism includes philosophy, and the appreciation of books a knowledge and love of

humanity. This requisite is usually superseded by extensive erudition; and Hazlitt's lack of great scholarship was a benefit to him in this regard. Few authors more clearly discerned the just relation of thought to action. With all his passionate love of talent, whether manifested in a poem or on the stage, by an orator or an Indian juggler, in the lines of the burin or the fresco-painting of an old master, Hazlitt perfectly understood the comparative worth of the practical and the imaginative, of physical enterprise and artistic skill. Thus he frequently frets, like the meditative prince, at his own want of aptitude for affairs, and laments that aspiration, heroism, and the instinct of reform, should "lose the name of action;" asserts that a happy man, with a good digestion, never writes poetry, and that a peasant girl collecting stones in a field, is a more harmonious being than a nervous, brain-weary author, speculating upon life instead of enjoying it. In this vein he is often paradoxical; yet the freedom it indicates from the narrowness and egotism of authorship, proves a wider range of observation and a larger sympathy than generally belong to the professed literary critic. Hazlitt's admiration of Napoleon is equal in degree, though different in kind, to that he cherished for Shakspeare; and the homely truth to nature in Hogarth gave him as keen, though a diverse enjoyment, as the splendid colouring of Titian. This universality does not spring exclusively from a catholic taste; it is rather the fruit of

an introspective mind. At the outset of his career, he wrote a treatise on "The Principles of Human Actions." His metaphysical insight was quite as remarkable as his eye for the picturesque; and to the vigilant watch over his own mental experience, —to the study of his own consciousness as affected by passion, truth, and intellectual agencies, he owes, in no small degree, that nicety of view and clearness of impression which he so eloquently unfolds. Indeed, "thinking too precisely" is the cause of most of his errors in opinion and much of his unhappiness as a man. It is not surprising that he sometimes looked with envy on the absorbing career of the statesman and the soldier. There is such a thing as anatomizing the soul, by an excess of reflection and sensibility; and no thoughtful reader can peruse the Liber Amoris of Hazlitt, without the deepest pity,— realizing how the very superiority of a man's nature may occasion his greatest infelicity by the exaggerated feeling that imagination and sentiment cast around unworthy objects. In its healthier action this metaphysical tendency proved an inspiration. To it we owe the masterly analysis of "Shakspeare's Characters," which, though ostensibly dramatic criticism, is in point of fact a work on the philosophy of life and human nature, more suggestive and legitimate than many approved textbooks on the subject. The striking portraits in the "Spirit of the Age," and many of the distinctions pointed out in the criticisms on the English Poets and Novelists, are

referable to the same quality. It impelled him also to record his personal impressions of gifted men, to note the conversation of Northcote, and to analyze, with so much zest and acuteness, the pleasure derivable from the fine arts.

The very subjects of his critical essays amply prove this remarkable versatility. "A Portrait by Vandyck" suggests pages of analytical comment and eloquent description. "Persons One Would Wish To Have Seen" unfolds a theory of social affinity equally marked by liberal feeling and individuality of taste. In one paper he explains the scholar's reserve, and in another the promptitude and tact of the man of the world; now defines the philosophical and now the practical character; here reproduces the delight Poussin experienced in painting a landscape, and there the remorseful horrors which unnerved Macbeth. The idiosyncrasies of the actor, the poet, the artist, the orator, and the theorist, were as familiar to him as the materials in his laboratory to the chemist. He delved amid the elements of humanity, and tested them in the crucible of thought and by the fire of imagination. He never forgot that nature and genius are primal, exhaustless, and divine, and was not to be kept from the intimate enjoyment of either by the conventionalities of life, or the authority of learning. Wherever they appeared, —in the literature of the past, or the gifts of a contemporary, in books or on canvass, in the sparkle of an evening colloquy or the full tide of parliamentary

eloquence, in character or form, sound or colour, in felicity of language or originality of ideas,—Hazlitt welcomed them with cordial zeal, and held them up to intelligent admiration. In spite, therefore, of minor defects of taste, unjustifiable prejudice, and hasty opinions, he enacted the part of an appreciative mind on a broader scale and with greater efficiency than any of the English critics.

The most common error in criticism is exclusive reliance on knowledge. Thus many persons imagine they wholly comprehend a statue when they have mastered its anatomical details; and while the spectator of poetic sympathies is lost in wonder at the expression of the Apollo Belvidere, the merely scientific observer is intent upon discovering a want of proportion in its extremities. Knowledge is only a part of the critic's preparation. It is, indeed, a desirable enlightenment to be informed that "in the group of the Laocoon the breast is expanded and the throat contracted, to show the agonies that convulse the frame are borne in silence;" but whoever stops here, and has not the capacity to enter into the moral significance of the work, derives but an inadequate idea of its meaning. Neither is a readiness to discover faults any test of critical ability well understood. It has been justly said that "we only work our way into excellence by being imprisoned in defects." It requires no great discernment to perceive that Shakspeare often commits gross errors of taste, but it needs a great soul to appreciate his vast

humanity; hundreds are offended by the sternness of Dante where one really feels his noble dignity; the most superficial rhymer can be annoyed at the conceits of Petrarch, while the genuine sentiment requisite to enjoy his sonnets is extremely rare; every one perceives that Alfieri's style is severe, but few that it is also sublime; Richter's heart-wisdom is as characteristic as his want of method and congruity; and it is easier to be disgusted with the vanity of Rousseau and Lamartine than to thoroughly apprehend the poetry of their minds. It is characteristic of Hazlitt to blend cordial eulogy with judicious fault-finding, and to look at a subject in its relative and absolute qualities.

To realize how needful is a just enlistment of the sympathies, as well as a calm exercise of judgment based on knowledge, in the highest criticism, we must remember that works of real genius appeal to the soul—to the entire consciousness; and if the intellect and the memory alone respond, it is obvious that the criticism is incomplete. Allston says of an artist, that "he bore the attack of his assailants with the equanimity of one who well knew that the ground he stood upon was not the quicksand of self-love." A great truth is implied in this fact;—that genuine appreciation is somewhat akin to love—a kind of voluntary self-abnegation; and that pride of opinion must be renounced, and the subject fill the heart as well as the mind of the critic. "Love," says Shakspeare, "lends *a precious seeing* to the

eye." When thus inspired, our very senses appear renewed. Not a latent grace, or significant hint, or moral charm is lost upon us. Our attention is fairly aroused, our perception quickened; we follow every note of the singer, detect every line and hue of the landscape, and consciously receive every image and sentiment of the bard. "The longer you live," said Goethe, "the more you will see how few men are capable of understanding the law of a production." Objective and merely technical criticism always gives evidence of this; yet we see men of excellent sense in practical things, absurdly applying the same canons of taste to Pope and Wordsworth, Racine and Shakspeare. Common sense and the sense of beauty are totally different endowments; and when one usurps the office of the other the effect is pitiable. Both are indispensable to the true critic. They were unusually blended in Hazlitt, and gave him both insight and catholicity.

A comprehensive turn of mind is not less important to the critic than a lively sense of correctness in detail. Without it he can scarcely estimate the influence of the age of a writer or artist upon his genius. There is, indeed, a species of criticism that is purely historical—such as the elaborate works of Hallam, Menzel, and others; and the light thrown by these dissertations upon philosophy and the intellectual progress of the race, show how extensive are the relations of the critical art. Modified as this is by individual peculiarities, it yet touches the

entire horizon of life as revealed in history. Pictures of the manners, a reflection of the spirit, or an embodiment of the learning of an epoch, such as the master-pieces of literature usually contain, are intelligible only by the collateral aids of science and history. Thus it often requires a union of scholarship and acuteness, of mental sympathy and vigorous reflection to attain the highest and most profound criticism. Ulrici, Foscolo, and other gifted men, have won enduring laurels in this field of labour. The less philosophical, but equally genial exercise of the art by special critics of the day, is more tinged by individual temperament and culture. Thus the animal spirits of Wilson, the classic taste of Landor, the metaphysical tendency of Coleridge, the religious opinions of John Foster, and the eclecticism of Brougham, give a peculiar character to their critical estimates. It is common to speak of this kind of writing as ephemeral; yet we believe its noblest specimens will outlive all but the highest class of fictions, and many of the merely fluent historical narratives at present so renowned. Next to the autobiography of original men, there is no legacy so precious to ardent and discerning minds, as their recorded thoughts and sentiments in reference to works of human genius, which are a common and perpetual inheritance, and a nucleus for the noblest sympathies of all generations.

The scope of Hazlitt's mental sympathies was remarkable when we consider the tenacity of his

opinions. So fixed are the tastes of most writers, that we can usually predict their critical aptitudes with certainty. Indeed, the editor of a successful modern review knows exactly which member of his literary circle will do full justice to each special work; and we recognise a natural adaptation, on the part of most authors, to certain departments of criticism; it is, to take an instance near home, quite appropriate for Channing to have illustrated the character of Fenelon, and Dana the acting of Kean. Where mere verbal details are to be sifted, a writer like Croker is available, but the memoirs of an old painter would elicit more genial comment from Mrs. Jameson. There is no branch of authorship to which division of labour has been more wisely applied than that of criticism. Yet we sometimes find a critic who not only appreciates widely diverse kinds of literature, but accepts the desirable and repudiates the offensive in each. This is the true distinction between prejudice and opinion; in nearly all but philosophical minds the former overlays and hinders the formation of the latter. The genuine critic, however, while condemning the misanthropy of Byron, none the less warmly appreciates his intensity; though cloyed by the dulcet numbers of Metastasio, is yet fully sensible of his lyric melody; and if disgusted with the meretricious in Moore, at the same time enjoys his musical triumphs over the harshness of our vernacular. To understand how complete was the scale of Hazlitt's judgment, and how, if needful,

it could modify his enthusiasm, we have only to compare the exuberant tone and freshness of his account of a "first acquaintance with poets," with the cool estimate he afterwards placed upon intellectual pleasures, in asserting that—"we put that which flutters the brain idly, for a moment, in competition with nature, which exists everywhere and lasts always." The cause of his frequent disparagement of literary labours and success, however, is often to be found in the fact that circumstances made that a necessity to him which should only have been a recreation. Hazlitt reading a favourite author on a summer day in an inn, or spontaneously writing his earnest tributes to the beauty and eternal worth of genius, is one thing; and Hazlitt drawn by a pitiless journalist from a haunt of dissipation, and spurred by want and what is "set down in the bond" to write, is quite another. An obvious reason for a certain ultraism that pervades his articles, is a want of elasticity, or rather gaiety, in his nature. To be effective, he must be serious. Utterly destitute of humour, although keenly alive to genuine wit, he treated everything gravely, and hence was apt to exaggerate whatever view he espoused. We consider this fault atoned for, however, by the superior vigour which a thoughtful and earnest spirit always imparts to every discussion. When a voluntary critic, Hazlitt's relation to his subject was vital; his genius, though sometimes fitful, was never languid. "It is

a very good office," we are told, "one man does another when he tells him the manner of his being pleased." And this is an office which no English critic has discharged with the ability of Hazlitt. His introduction of readers to the authors, artists, and characters he loves, is not a piece of conventional formality: nor is it done merely with intelligence and tact, but with an ardour that warms the sympathies, and a directness that compels recognition.

The Orator.

EVERETT.

ORATORY may be called the efflorescence of the mind; and to its perfection it is requisite not only that the hoarded seeds of knowledge should germinate and expand into flowers, but that they should also put forth vigorous roots of thought as well as firm and graceful branches of argument, capable of sustaining the precious burden and lifting it into the light of common day. To this end a substantial groundwork of facts is essential; and their skilful selection and apposite use is no small part of an orator's gift. For this wise tact Everett's oratory is remarkable. An instance occurs in his address in behalf of a new attempt to complete the monument on Bunker Hill, when he makes the very delay of the work a cogent reason for recommencing it, by suggesting a coincidence between the seven years it remained stationary and the period of the revolutionary war; and in his speech at Lexington, Ky., he touches the instinct of union and nationality in the hearts of his audience, by reminding them that the

flourishing town where they are assembled, was named for the first battle-ground of the war of Independence, by a band of hunters who happened there first to hear of its occurrence. His orations abound in this happy introduction of significant and appropriate facts. Those who are disposed to question the need of the inventive faculty in oratory, should consider whether the talent of placing a subject in new and striking relations is not a great secret of the art; it is certainly one in which Burke excelled, and which Everett has used with rare felicity. But not only in the efficient application but in the patient research for facts does the latter show eminent ability. He is quite as remarkable for industry as for skill; and his method is as absolute as his taste. Indeed the combination of these usually dissevered qualities—the very completeness of the result, blinds a careless reader to the consummate art of such an orator as Everett. We can only realize it by analyzing the constructive process, which is as thorough and varied as that involved in the composition of a poem, history, or modern novel of the best class. There must be, in the first place, a basis of reality, either in the shape of historical evidence or moral truth; and this is to be stated with precision and emphasis; rendered picturesque by the scenic description or character-painting that belongs to it, linked to the passing moment by some general association or local sympathy; and from the theme thus unfolded the orator must [illegible] a vivid sentiment,

so as to render it not only impressive to the understanding but affecting to the heart. To the realization of such an intellectual triumph, it is evident that no ordinary means are adequate. It calls for knowledge, judgment, fancy, command of language, and a positive gift of expression; it includes all the principles of high art—the management of light and shade, grouping, perspective, fidelity to details, and a constant eye to general effect. The mastery of these elements in the use of thought and language, is oratory. Bold and extraordinary displays of them, in an unfinished degree, are frequently made, in this country, where public speaking is so common; but the best of such efforts resemble those we are now considering, as the crude sketch does the finished picture. None of our orators have profited by such a thorough academical training, by such mature habits of scholarship, or by such loyal practice in affairs, as Everett. In respect to integrity of knowledge and action, there is a completeness in his character seldom realized by educated Americans, whose labours, even in the serene kingdom of letters, are usually marked by haste—for incompleteness is apt to stamp the character and culture as well as the cities of a young republic.

If we recall the instances we have personally experienced of great human eloquence, we shall find them of two kinds—one memorable for the perfection of art, and the other, on account of a natural magnetism or impressiveness, apparently the absolute

gift of nature; sometimes, though rarely, these two species of oratory coalesce in one individual, and perhaps this is the perfection of speech. Webster, our greatest living orator, has said eloquence exists "in the man, in the subject, and in the occasion;" but we not infrequently witness its partial exhibition in one of these phases, and seldom do they all harmoniously unite. Indeed, so various are the elements of the art that it is impossible to reduce it to a rigid system. The statesman is eloquent when he makes a clear, emphatic statement, which places some intricate question of national concern, in a new, vivid, and true light; the man of science is eloquent when he expounds a law of nature by an inductive chain of reasoning, at once simple and profound; the advocate is eloquent when he excites the sympathies of his audience, in behalf of his cause, by appeals to their compassion, sense of honour, or love of beauty; and the priest is eloquent when, by the solemn feeling of his expression, he awakens sentiments of awe, humility, or gratitude. The process in each case is ostensibly the same; but the method is quite diverse, according as our judgment, taste, or emotions are addressed; sometimes, too, it is the clearness of the idea, sometimes the grace of the image, and again the pathos or the logic, the affluent language, or the musical tone of the discourse, that wins the heart or convinces the mind.

No two styles of oratory can present a greater contrast than those of an Indian chief and an Italian

friar;—the one standing like a figure of "monumental bronze," and uttering sententious metaphors with the firm tone of a stoic; and the other restlessly moving to and fro, now bending his frame almost to the earth, and now lifting impassioned looks to the skies—his voice ranging through every key-note of sound with the quick transitions of eager sensibility; and yet the attributes of both declaimers are perfectly characteristic and efficient. Compare the pulpit eloquence of Chalmers and Irving with that of Channing and Buckminster, and remark by what different methods the same general effects were produced. It would appear that all great orators owe their success to some idiosyncrasy of character, elocution, or temperament, which fuses and gives peculiar significance to the acquired elements of the art. Thus Mirabeau's audacity, the ability to simplify and unfold a subject, united with vehemence, which distinguished Fox; the ease and dignity of Chatham, and the ornate imagery of Phillips, gave to each his peculiar sway. That some inimitable charm belongs to all true oratory, is also evident from the fact that there is so much traditional eloquence; the famous speech of Sheridan at the trial of Hastings, and of Webster in reply to Hayne, are familiar examples; no attempt to realize the effect by description or report ever satisfied the auditors. In our own country the traditional eloquence of Hamilton, Patrick Henry, Fisher Ames, Pinckney, Wirt, and others, has identified their names with the art of oratory to

a degree far beyond what their written legacies justify; there was, doubtless, an individual attraction in their speeches like the volatile fragrance of a rose—but feebly caught and imperfectly transmitted. High as is the estimate we are disposed to place upon eloquence as a direct intellectual agent, and interesting as is the memory of its triumphs, their evanescence only leads us to value more highly the conservative principles of literary art. It is no small privilege which the students of oratory enjoy, when they peruse the addresses of Burke; his wealth of mind, genius in felicitously changing the light in which his subjects were disposed, and splendid affluence of thought and expression, were happily combined with that discipline and rationality which makes written effectively retain the unction of spoken eloquence.

Thus oratory not only serves to celebrate occasion, but to transmit its spirit and hallow its remembrance. No portion of ancient literature has exerted a more vital influence upon modern than its standard oratory; and for the obvious reason that it sprung from actual exigencies, and yet represents actual sentiments of popular concern. It is, indeed, a form of literature native to republics; and, perhaps, their most spontaneous intellectual product. Orations constitute our literary staple by the same law that causes letters and comedies to attain such perfection in France, domestic novels in England, and the lyrical drama in Italy. They spring from the wants

and development of our national life. The orations of Demosthenes and Cicero originated in the necessity and benefit of appeals to the people in Greece and Rome; and the many anecdotes related to show the pains taken by these great orators to perfect themselves in all the mechanism and resources of the art, prove how efficient a means it is, in republics, both of renown and advancement. But the test of an oration is not only its immediate effect; there are tricks of elocution, a jugglery of manner, and even a personal captivation that so win the senses as to bewilder the judgment. A genuine specimen of oratory should be an artistic as well as rhetorical study, and as such, gratify the taste and warm the sympathies of the thoughtful reader. Few can sustain this ordeal like Everett.

With the freshness of our national youth glowing in the sentiments, and often in the very subjects of his addresses, he breathes into them the meditative spirit and disciplined tone that haunts the old world; the wide knowledge of ancient seats of learning, the serene philosophy that makes the air of temple-porch and abbey-cloister venerable, the mellow hues that, like the soft haze of our autumnal season, brood over the pictures, architecture, and landscape of Europe; in a word, the neutral tint—the conservative tone, the sober light which comes only from communion with the past—the genuine eclecticism, dignity, and ease of true scholarship, refine and chasten the oratory of Everett. Were it more bril-

liant, extravagant, or intense, flowing with the rhetorical sparkle of Macaulay, or studded with the original epithets of Carlyle, the morbid taste of the multitude would doubtless find a greater zest in the style; but the reader whose perception of true beauty and force of expression has not been vitiated, who has learned how nearly allied are simplicity and vigour, perspicuity and grace, the natural and the true in language, will appreciate the subdued, even, and pure utterance of our vernacular in the pages of Everett. Eloquence is a comparative term, and may be applied equally to the ponderous sense of Johnson and the delicate sensibility of Tennyson; but in its relation to the art of oratory, there is no doubt that its inspiration must be sought in what is intelligible, broad, and permanent—both in sentiment and language. The less of artifice in the use of the latter for such an end, the better for oratory; and the more it becomes the mere vehicle of ideas—the transparent medium of emotion—the more directly will the shaft of argument find its way to the mind, and the glowing metaphor to the imagination. All great art is simple; a statue, a cartoon, a sonnet, or an oration, that survives the age of its production, will be found to embody some truth, idea, or principle of beauty, with a singleness of purpose and a unity of design that holds and perpetuates it intact. Tricks of rhetoric will no more win suffrages beyond the moment, than grotesque forms in sculpture or inharmonious colours in painting. Everett, as a verbal

artist, has sought to harmonize rather than dazzle with the elements of his art. He uses them not for experiment but for efficiency, like a master, not a tyro or charlatan; he trusts to the intrinsic beauty and force of language, not to novel combinations; with almost colloquial ease and fluency, he unites the impressive and graceful in style, and adapts it to the varying phases of his subject with a skill both picturesque and musical, yet always chaste and judicious.

Perhaps the most difficult achievement for an orator thus intellectually furnished and practically skilled, is to give to his speech entire perspicuity and directness. He is called upon to address a promiscuous assemblage, and it is essential to his success that his reasoning shall be at once intelligible, his illustrations immediately striking, and his appeal to the sympathies responsive. In a word, with the knowledge, the logic and the grace of oratory must blend a popular element. He speaks not only to but for the people: he is often their interpreter; like a priest or a prophet, he ministers at a crowded altar, announces national oracles and expounds truths of universal interest. He cannot lose the man in the philosopher, or the patriot in the scholar—but philosophy and scholarship must add grace and efficiency to the uttered sentiments of manhood and citizenship; they must illustrate and sustain, not supersede or overlay the human, the familiar, and the instinctive. Everett's peculiar merit is, that he has adapted

his oratory to the popular mind without the least sacrifice of dignity or grace. Always intelligible, but never commonplace, he vindicates the utility not less than the beauty of his art.

One cause of the power of Demosthenes is thought to have been his manner of concentrating the significance of his sentences upon the final words. The attention is thus sustained, and the effect coincident with the pause of the speaker's voice. An admirable characteristic of Everett is the use of a similar principle on a more extended scale; he almost habitually suspends his bold figures and most earnest appeals until the mind has been prepared by clear statement or able reasoning to yield spontaneously to the feeling which both combine to suggest and to justify. Thus, so perfectly were the auditors at the Eulogy on Lafayette warmed by his calm, authentic and flowing narrative of that noble and benign career —that when he tried the bold experiment of invoking the picture of Washington and the bust of the departed at his side—for a moment, every eye turned expectantly to those inanimate objects—as if the "long silence of that votive canvass" and those "marble lips" would, indeed, break at the thrilling adjuration of the orator. So in his address at Amherst, many specific instances of the advancement of science were cited before he indulged in the comprehensive definition of its extent, "from the law that binds a planet to its orbit to the animalculæ in a drop of water;" and in his official welcome of Gen. Jackson

to Bunker Hill, at a time of great party excitement, and when representing political opinions quite diverse from those of the veteran, it was a felicitous stroke of oratory to rise above the immediate and the local, and identify his guest with the grand historical series of events which began by staining the soil where they stood with patriot blood, and ended by wrapping New Orleans in flames.

But the orations of Everett abound in the liberal inferences of an enlarged, not less than in the acute details of a studious mind. There can be no sustained eloquence without philosophy; mere calls upon the sensibility produce reaction or indifference; and exclusive elegance of diction wearies or satiates; these graces must be nerved and fortified by reason. The greatest orators have been distinguished for philosophic insight—that broad and deep reliance upon absolute truth that renders its very announcement a conviction. We doubt if the philosophy scattered through the orations of Everett has been as generally appreciated as the poetry. The ear and fancy have been captivated so as sometimes to win attention from more severe and thoughtful, yet not less essential charms. The orations on the "Progress of Science," the "American Constitution," the "Circumstances favourable to American Literature," "Education," and other subjects of a didactic nature, are beautiful specimens of reasoning —lucid, strong and just; and they contain passages of the purest argumentative eloquence. For pic-

turesque description, which would be cordially recognised as such in a Waverley romance, turn to the account of the landing of the Mayflower, or the appearance of Boston at three different epochs; for characterization, such as would be quoted with admiration from the pages of Macaulay or Hazlitt, note the sketches of Copernicus and Luther, Adams and Lafayette, or the Youth of Washington and Franklin; for ripe and graceful scholarship, mark the allusions to Greece and Rome everywhere introduced so naturally, with such an absence of pedantry, and with such harmonious tact. It is, as we have before observed, the apparently incidental and wholly unostentatious union of these traits with the immediate exigencies of oratory, that prevents so many from realizing their worth and rarity. Had they been embodied in a history—like those of Prescott and Bancroft—or taken the form of popular fiction—in other words, had they borne a title less fugitive in its associations than "Orations," they would have secured their author a more permanent and extensive renown. In literature, as in life, we are still too much under the dominion of names, and too little alive to the impression of facts; yet lyrics, at the present day, have exerted a wider influence than epics, brief critical essays than elaborate treatises, and journals than folios. The province of the genuine orator, in this age and country, includes every element of literary art; he must be an historian, a philosopher, and an essayist, as well as a rheto-

rician; he must be versed in the events of the past and the discoveries of the present; he must know how effectually to describe, argue and appeal; and his sympathies must touch, if they cannot embrace, the whole vast circle of human knowledge and human interests; he must be a conservative, through accurate knowledge of what has gone before, and a reformer, by virtue of aspirations for the future and confidence in the progress of humanity. These conditions of equipment and facility have been adequately realized among us by Edward Everett; and the record of his labours is therefore a genuine index of American feeling and cultivation; in special qualities and on certain topics he has been excelled; but in view of his range, versatility, and the manner in which he has sustained himself therein, as an orator, he stands pre-eminent.

If Webster is the Michael Angelo of American oratory, Everett is the Raphael. In the former's definition of eloquence, he recognises its latent existence in the occasion as well as in the man, and in the subject; his own oratory is remarkable for grasping the bold and essential, for developing, as it were, the anatomical basis—the very sinews and nerves of his subject; while Everett instinctively catches and unfolds the grace of occasion, whatever it be; in his mind the sense of beauty is vivid, and nothing is more surprising in his oratory, than the ease and facility with which he seizes upon the redeeming associations of every topic, however far removed it

may be from the legitimate domain of taste or scholarship. In addressing a Mercantile Library Association, he places Commerce in so noble and captivating a light that the "weary honours of successful ambition," won by studious toil, grow dim in comparison to the wide relations, social influence, and princely munificence of the great merchant. He advocates the privileges, and describes the progress of Science, and the imagination expands in delightful visions of the ameliorating destinies of the world, and the infinite possibilities that crowd the path of undiscovered truth. He sets before an Association of Mechanics the relation of their pursuit to the welfare of man, and the importance of knowledge to the artisan, and their vocation rises at once to the highest dignity and promise. He enforces the natural charms and permanent utility of agriculture, and the farmer's lot seems the most desirable of human occupations. The variety of occasions to which he has thus ably ministered is the best proof of his fertile resources and adaptive power. He has successfully plead for Greece and Africa, for the prisoner and the intemperate, for art and literarature, for popular and college education, for railroads and the militia, for the completion of the monument on Bunker Hill, and the restoration of York Minster, for manufactures, trade, the distribution of the Bible, and the cause of Ireland; and

> "From the eddies of oblivion's stream,
> Propitious snatched each memorable theme."

Equally impressive and graceful, while the intellectual crowd, at a New England academic festival, hang upon his familiar accents, and when responding to the welcome of a foreign city; and, crowned with the graces of true oratory, his eloquence is as unfaltering and appropriate, when uttered to a royal society as to a delegation of Sacs and Foxes, and as readily attunes itself to the fading memory of the illiterate old soldier, as to the quick sympathies of the youthful scholar.

In estimating the merits of an orator we must thus take into view the occasion as well as the man. The address of a chief to his army on the eve of battle, of an advocate to a jury in a case involving life, or of a candidate at the hustings, have for their object immediate practical results—and spirit, ingenuity, or personal tact, may prove more efficient than the highest literary art. The harangues of the French Revolution caught from the impending horrors of the time, an impetuosity and dramatic energy that swayed men whose passions were too inflamed to be reached either by reason or taste. But when the orator's task is purely commemorative; when no insignia of action seconds his appeal, and no antagonism of debate excites his logical combativeness, to the treasured resources of his own mind, and the absolute principles of eloquence he must look for inspiration. The sanction of vast personal influence gave power to the sententious appeals of Napoleon; and the actual ferment of a liberal outbreak among

the people, inspired the mind of Lamartine when his words soothed the multitude. It is quite a different experiment to create the very sentiment you must address, to place in a dramatic light the occasion you are called upon to celebrate, and from the calm tide of ordinary life to cause the spirit of the past to emerge in beauty. To canonize the departed hero and sage by enshrining their names in authentic and classic eulogy; to commemorate great historical events by causing them to reappear to the fancy, with the vast array of consequences that link them to the passing hour; to revive the sentiment of some time-worn anniversary in all its pristine fervour; and plead effectually in behalf of a cause which has only intrinsic and impalpable claims upon attention, is an office to which only the highly-cultivated and gifted orator is equal. He cannot trust to the mere artifices of rhetoric. His audience wait in calm expectancy; they are to be informed, reasoned with, convinced, and, at length, warmed and melted by his words. No sympathetic auditor fails, at such moments, especially when the occasion is important, and the orator of high repute, to feel a thrill of suspense in his behalf; in the case of Everett this instantly gives place to a delightful confidence. He is so thoroughly self-possessed, so completely armed, that we listen or read, as we roam beside a noble stream, or through an autumnal wood, sure of a succession of pleasing objects, and an ever beautiful and limitless perspective.

The Reformer.

GODWIN.

THERE comes a time to every thinker and enthusiast, when he instinctively questions the circumstances that surround him, the relations in which he finds himself, and the social obligations that seem an inevitable and inherited necessity. This happens when some natural want, or honest opinion, or conscious right is thwarted by these arbitrary regulations; or when a great and obvious social wrong presses heavily upon a fellow-creature, and the injustice awakens his sympathy. The reflections incident to such experience, usually convince the liberal mind that there is vast injury bequeathed by custom; that prejudice, fear, and indolence, only hinder society from discarding a yoke, that dwarfs the intellect, and narrows the heart of its members; and that an infinite need of reform exists. In some breasts the conviction thus engendered is temporary; others are reconciled to it by the idea of necessity; the many soon learn how to evade or compromise the particular evil that interferes with their development;

and only in the few is there bred a permanent spirit of resistance, a solemn determination to keep individuality intact, or a generous passion to ameliorate the condition or enfranchise the life of society. The majority of reformers, too, dedicate themselves to a special cause and promote it by the machinery and the arts of faction; so that the number is very select, who attempt to strike at the root of social evil by reference to first principles, who boldly, yet with discrimination, institute an inquiry into the claims of a law, the authenticity of a custom, or the sanction of a practice that interferes with the primal interests of humanity. The most extravagant discussions of this kind were excited by the French Revolution, which by reducing social life to its chaotic elements, seemed to furnish new avenues of truth and opportunities for reform. The atrocities, however, of that terrible experiment caused a reaction so powerful as to strengthen the position of the conservative. As the ferment subsided, reason soon equalized the inferences of both extremes of opinion; and thus, in the end, promoted the advancement of truth; and the result has been a more wise examination of the principles of social life, the laws of well-being, and the resources of nature in her relation to humanity. This has become the noblest and most auspicious office of the literary reformer.

Byron laughed at the idea of any one being seriously injured by a book, and Napoleon professed to regard literary talent as an abstraction. Doubtless,

when tried according to strict utility, many of the aspects of literature are merely tasteful and curious; and there is some justification for the low estimate in which men of practical science and efficient action hold its pursuit. If we glance over the literary history of any nation, we find that its agency is limited, that it serves as a representative oftener than an initiative purpose, and chiefly gives us insight into the mental tastes and habitudes of an epoch or a race. Thus, it is a pleasing task to follow the intellectual growth of the South of Europe from the crude and picturesque ballad, to the classic epic or tragedy; or to behold the entire spirit of an age embodied by the poet in vivid and lasting colours; but we cannot fail to perceive that at the very time these masterpieces were fashioned, the war, the intrigue, the political and social economy of the nation proceeded uninfluenced by the labours of bard or philosopher, who reaped their harvest, even of fame, only at a subsequent period. The relation of the writer to his age is often intimate without being essential—in what may be called the ornamental branch of letters. Men of action sway the people. Events operate more directly than ideas; and the scholar is often conscious that his position is isolated and comparatively unimportant. Yet it is to be remembered that all literature does not consist of fanciful creations, that it is not exclusively an art. The sonnet, the play, and the chronicle may only serve an occasional, a recreative, or, at best, a conservative end; the bard may

only "amuse his graver friends;" and the tangible deed may wholly overwhelm the airy word. Literature, in short, may, in the practical world, assume no higher agency than that of a graceful diversion; yet its whole significance is not thus exhausted; it is capable of another office. If, chameleon-like, it takes its hue from the immediate and the transitory, it also may be inspired by character, and become the medium of truth. The writer, if ordained to entertain, to celebrate, and to represent, is likewise endowed to enlighten, to inspire, and to reform. Formerly the latter aim was indirectly sought. Cervantes, it has been said, "laughed Spain's chivalry away;" the French comedy exposed social abuses, and the English essayists refined the tone of manners; but the genuine literary reformer is the offspring of more extensive and serious enterprise; and the history of modern literature would exhibit a new and sublime phase of a subject which previously, however curious and pleasing, unfolds little of the interest which attaches to a great moral purpose. Even Bonaparte would scarcely have ventured to call Luther an ideologist. The truth is, as civilization has diminished the power of material forces upon social destiny, literature has furnished weapons to the man of action who, in ruder times, would have scorned the pen and trusted in the sword. Manhood has, at length, found its place in literature. It has been made evident that courage, firmness, sagacity — the qualities which chiefly distinguish political, military, and scientific

leaders, may find scope in the writer, give to his style genuine power, and to his thought absolute influence. There are few more reliable signs of true cultivation than patience and self-possession; and these traits have gradually won vantage-ground, once held by physical force and superstition. It is now believed that, however lightly received at first, all truth is destined to make its legitimate impression, —to work its way gradually into a practical result, and become embodied in the life of society. Hence the activity and range which speculative inquiry has taken; hence the faith which sustains the advocates of each reform founded in nature and reason, in their consistent though apparently ineffectual course; and hence the satisfaction which the sincere lovers of truth and humanity realize, in the emphatic annunciation of their opinions, and their indifference to the apathy or scorn they momently excite. Law is now a recognised fact among men; and science, by promulgating the laws of nature, has deepened reliance upon this principle. It is widely known and felt that character, fortune, government, history, and life are all thus regulated, defined, and predestined; and, among other inevitable tendencies, however the conviction may be darkened by cant, is that the law of progress is now credited, and the process of it is believed to be the gradual assimilation of truth.

Thus what society ordains and enforces in regard to property, marriage, religion, and other universal interests, is brought into distinct contrast with the

natural sentiments, when they are fresh, unsubdued and ingenuous. According to the character which applies the test, there follows either resignation and conformity, direct opposition and protest, or voluntary seclusion from active, social existence. The three English poets, who met at Bristol, at the end of the last century, and so ardently planned a scheme of emigration to America—there to live according to nature and justice, though regarded now as so many knight-errant youths, represented, in fact, a prevalent state of mind. It is curious and instructive to recur to the subsequent opinions of the only member of the trio who achieved a long life of respectable and successful industry. He awoke from the dream of social reform, very soon after circumstances interfered with the proposed experiment, and then wrote thus to a friend:

"Have you read Madame Roland's Appel à l'Impartiale Postérité? It is one of those books that make me love individuals, and yet dread, detest, and despise mankind in a mass. There was a time when I believed in the persuadibility of man, and had a mania of man-mending. Experience has taught me better. The ablest physician can do little in the great lazar-house of society; it is a pest-house that infects all within its atmosphere. He acts the wisest part who retires from the contagion; nor is that part either a selfish or a cowardly one; it is ascending the Ark, like Noah, to preserve a remnant which may become the whole. As to what is the cause of the

incalculable wretchedness of society, and what is the panacea, I have long felt certified in my own mind. The rich are strangely ignorant of the miseries to which the lower and larger part of mankind are abandoned. The savage and the civilized states are alike unnatural and unworthy the origin and end of man. Hence the prevalence of skepticism and atheism, which, from being the effect, becomes the cause of vice."*

Writers, however, of comprehensive views, even without experiencing, like Southey, this early passion for social reform, and thence lapsing into conservatism, do not fail to recognise the necessity of some kind of compensation and relief from the organization of life around them. Thus Goethe, who so effectually isolated himself from popular movements, declares that "every individual has, in virtue of his natural tendencies, a right to principles which do not destroy his individuality." And it is by cleaving to these principles that the progress of true reform is most accelerated. The dislike that wise men feel for rabid innovators, for the intolerance of those who have espoused a single idea, and run a life-tilt against a special abuse, is more than justified by the spirit in which such reformers work, the means they adopt, and the prerogatives they claim. More to be honoured and relied upon is the consistent philosopher and poet, who, without arrogance, but with emphatic

* Life and Correspondence of Southey.

clearness, and in tones of serene wisdom and genuine love, proclaims and makes beautiful and apparent the truth—confiding in its innate power and eternal vitality.

The uprightness and kindly disposition of Godwin authorize faith in the purity of his motives, and the disinterestedness of his zeal. In May, 1791, he conceived the idea of a work that should analyze the evils of the social system by the test of reason. A remarkable frankness and patience characterize the tone of "Political Justice." The author begins with announcing his views of mental philosophy, unfolds what he considers the primary elements of human nature, and thence educes a social theory. He declares that "the moral qualities of men are the produce of the impressions made upon them;" that there is no original propensity to evil; that mankind are progressive, and all that is needful to insure their advancement is "unlimited discussion;" that justice should be the invariable guide; that she requires only "the acting under every circumstance in the manner that shall procure the greatest quantity of general good." To illustrate and enforce these principles is the object of this elaborate dissertation. It is a striking proof of the interest generally felt, at the time of its appearance, in such inquiries, and also of the confidence that existed in Godwin's ability, that he received seven hundred pounds for the work. Notwithstanding the earnestness with which he espoused and advocated reform, his exem-

plary moderation is apparent in the following extract from the introduction :—

"When these advantages have been unfolded by superior penetration, they cannot yet for some time be expected to be understood by the multitude. Time, reading, and conversation, are necessary to render them familiar. They must descend in regular gradations from the most thoughtful to the most unobservant. He that begins with an appeal to the people may be suspected to understand little of the true character of mind."

He then proceeds to discuss war, religious establishments, law, standing armies, oaths, legislation, marriage, and education, according to this system of complete and immaculate justice, as interpreted by pure reason. As might have been anticipated, this process, rigidly followed, brought to light many important truths, or rather placed them in a more striking point of view; the great questions involved in the discussion were rendered more palpable, and their consequences more intelligible. It was like applying some powerful test in chemical science; latent qualities were developed, and unsuspected affinities revealed; but in the end, it was also proved that the test was not of universal application. Godwin's reasoning may be, in the main, correct, but his premises refer, not to mankind, but to a particular and small class of men; his principles, carried out to the letter, are adapted exclusively to the intellectual, to those who habitually exercise self-control. In a word,

they belong to a race of philosophers, to a republic of mind; and, only upon the hypothesis that human society will one day be reconstructed on such a model, can they be reasonably deemed of any general utility. The consciousness of the reformer was too much his guide in these speculations; he omitted to take into the account many of the instinctive attributes of humanity. He exaggerated the acquired at the expense of the innate; and, feeling within himself the capacity to respect the rights of others without external obligation, he inferred a like disposition as originally universal in his fellow-creatures. The sentiment of virtue, in his heart, was not only natural, it was romantic. He coolly declares the propriety of sacrificing not only interest, but affection, to justice. He recognises nothing sacred in man but reason. The intuitive is quite overlooked. Hence the fallacy of many of his suggestions. What then, it may be asked, is his claim to the title of reformer? That of having followed truth, in one direction, with a boldness and an acute perception rarely equalled, and given an impulse to the rational investigation of social evils, as well as a new insight into the dangerous tendencies of prescription and conventionalism. The "Political Justice" is to be consulted, not for implicit belief, but on account of its noble vindication of individual man, and suggestive thoughts on the progress of society. It is to be sought, as were the alchemists and the astrologers of old, by men of judgment;—not in the expectation

of supernatural aid, but to acquire a knowledge of those laws with which the pursuit of a chimera incidentally made their votaries familiar. Godwin's remarks on different forms of government and means of culture, on the need of mental independence and the satisfaction of pursuing truth, are full of serene wisdom. He has exposed the evils of hypocrisy more cogently than any preacher; and described the happiness and efficiency of a free, heroic, and just mind, in a way to charm every generous heart. His courage, his rationality, his tranquil faith in his race, are noble attractions; and he makes us keenly feel that "the fault is in ourselves, not in our stars, that we are underlings."

The following passages illustrate both the style and the principles of "Political Justice:"

"Nothing can be more adverse to reason, or inconsistent with the nature of man, than positive regulations, tending to continue a certain mode of proceeding, when its utility is gone."

* * * * * *

"I ought to prefer no human being to another because that being is my father, my wife, or my son, but because, for reasons which equally appeal to all understandings, that being is entitled to preference."

* * * * * *

"Real intellectual improvement demands that mind should as speedily as possible be advanced to the height of knowledge already existing among the enlightened members of the community; and start

thence in pursuit of farther acquisitions. But public education has always expended its energies in the support of prejudice; it teaches its pupils, not the fortitude that shall bring every proposition to the test of examination, but the art of vindicating such tenets as may chance to be previously established.

"Let us for a moment give the reins to reflection, and endeavour to conceive the state of mankind when justice should form the public and general principle. In that case, our moral feelings would assume a firm and wholesome tone, for they would not be perpetually counteracted by examples, that weakened their energy and confounded their clearness. Men would be fearless, because they would know that there were no legal snares lying in wait for their lives. They would be courageous, because no man would be pressed to the earth that another might enjoy immoderate luxury; because every one would be secure of the just reward of his industry and prize of his exertions. Jealousy and hatred would cease, for they are the offspring of injustice. Every man would speak truth with his neighbour, for there would be no temptation to falsehood and deceit. Mind would find its level, for there would be everything to encourage and to animate. Science would be unspeakably improved, for understanding would convert it into a real power, no longer an *ignis fatuus*, shining and expiring by turns, and leading us into sloughs of sophistry, false science, and specious mistakes. All men would be disposed to avow

their dispositions and actions; none would endeavour to suppress the just eulogium of his neighbour; for, so long as there were tongues to record, the suppression would be impossible; nor fear to detect the misconduct of his neighbour, for there would be no laws converting the sincere expression of our convictions into a libel."

* * * * * *

"The genuine and wholesome state of mind is to be unloosed from shackles, and to expand every fibre of its frame, according to the independent and individual impressions of truth upon that mind. How great would be the progress of intellectual improvement, if men were unfettered by the prejudices of education, unseduced by the influence of a corrupt state of society, and accustomed to yield without fear to the guidance of truth, however unexplored might be the regions, and unexpected the conclusion to which she conducted us? We cannot advance in the voyage of happiness, unless we be wholly at large upon the stream that would carry us thither; the anchor that we first looked upon as the instrument of our safety, will at last appear to be the means of detaining our progress."

* * * * * *

"The true source of cheerfulness is benevolence. The pursuits of mankind are commonly frigid and contemptible, and the mistake comes, at last, to be detected. But virtue is a charm that never fades. The soul that perpetually overflows with kindness

and sympathy will always be cheerful. The man who is always busied in contemplation of public good will always be active."

It is worthy of observation that many of the tenets of reformers, when suggested in friendly converse as abstract propositions, are received with little of the horror they inspire, when seriously advanced as practicable ideas. Thus, reflecting men of all parties agree, that "government is a necessary evil, and the less we have of it the better;" that "attendance upon public worship has no absolute connexion with religious feeling;" that "rulers are in a great measure inaccessible to truth," that "society tramples on the genuine nature of things," and that "uniformity of opinion is unnatural." These, and other propositions that meet us in every page of Godwin's treatise, are substantially true: as subjects of private discussion, they do not strike us in a formidable light; it is only when linked to the two ideas, upon which the author of Political Justice founds his argument, that they alarm the conservative. "Error," we are told, "is principally indebted for its permanence to social institutions;" hence the wisdom of the reformer's attack; he conceives "politics to be the proper vehicle of a liberal morality;" hence, through this channel, he thought a peaceful revolution could be achieved; "Literature," he declares, "taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdom;" hence it was adopted as the medium of

influencing opinion to act upon political agencies, and, through them, upon society. The great practical mistake lies in the means adopted, not in the end proposed. It is in the individual that all true reform originates; and it is by promoting individuality—by cherishing its sanctity and recognising its prerogatives,—that social progress is best secured. Meantime, the writings of honest and earnest reformers, are so many contributions towards valuable truth. The panacea they offer may be chimerical; but the evils they state are real, and the duties they urge upon man, in his private character, lie at the basis of all free and enlightened society. Godwin thought deeply on this great theme. His views are fitted to make each thoughtful reader alive to the interests of humanity, and to his own liabilities and capacity. He saw through the dust of antiquity and over the high walls of prescription. He looked with reverence and love upon the nature of man. He keenly felt the perversity of his arrangements; and therefore wrote eloquently of his wants, errors, and prospects.

The unselfish and truly intelligent members of the professions—the lawyer, the physician, the divine, the soldier, and the mariner, of comprehensive minds, are quite ready to admit the essential truth of his estimate of their several callings, when weighed in the scales of truth. His morality, too, in its principles, is not only for the most part just but scriptural. His inefficiency as a reformer, therefore, is

owing to the isolated view he takes of human nature. He places it on a lofty height, and contemplates it in its absolute, rather than its actual, relations. If man was exclusively and universally a rational creature, Godwin's system would have a more practical value; for the independence of all ties, the superiority to passion, the thoughtful equanimity and heroic self-devotion, which he takes for granted, instead of being the exceptions, would prove the rule. As it is, in his advocacy of human rights and progress, he assumed a far more intellectual ground, and surveyed the question from a more abstract plane, than Burke, Paine, or any of the popular writers, who in their appeals and reasonings, went much nearer the common sense and sympathies of the multitude. The course he adopted, however, threw new light on the path of reform, by bringing into relief its latent principles. Seldom had so bold, powerful, and collected a thinker investigated questions of this nature. His "Inquiry" is scarcely tinged with the atmosphere of ordinary life. He takes up the subject like a new-comer to our planet, unswayed either by habit or association. His work may be described as the application of intellect to life. The result was, that he proved that reason is not the only guide, and, in doing this, he fulfilled a vast though negative service; besides incidentally contributing new impulse and information to the cause of individual culture and social progress. A kind of Roman inflexibility marks his adherence to the rational; in loyalty to individual thought, he has

seldom been equalled. In this deliberate, concentrated, and individual research, consists his genius. It first gained him renown as exhibited in the dissection of the inner life of his characters, as in Falkland,—a quality for which he has been compared to our earliest novelist, Brockden Brown.

Attacked by such men as Malthus, Mackintosh, and Parr, his wife, because of her previous relations with him, deprived of the cherished friendship of Mrs. Siddons, disappointed in the pecuniary return of many of his literary experiments,—he yet lived on with the frugality, the patience, the industry, and the rectitude, of a man, who, in the voluntary exercise of his own resources, found adequate comfort and inspiration. He united the mental self-reliance of Mirabeau to the gentleness of Berkeley. A fine critic tells us, that his happiest vein of talk was gossiping on old authors. Southey bears testimony to the benignity and wisdom of his expression; and Hazlitt says he looked "like a metaphysician grafted on a dissenting minister." Wordsworth, in his youth, looked to him as an oracle; and all unprejudiced observers unite in ascribing to him a placid temper, benevolent aspirations, and profound sagacity. He was an enthusiastic lover of genius and character, and ardently cultivated society thus enriched. He was, however, personally but little known, at one period, on account of the dangerous opinions ascribed to him; at another, because of his open disregard of what society demands, in his relations with one

of the other sex; and, at all times, from the peculiar nature of his genius, which sprang from reflection, and was, therefore, ill-adapted to the small exigencies of general intercourse. Philosophical candour has been justly considered the great merit of his didactic writings; and metaphysical insight, of his fictions. The latter trait seems to have been inherited by his daughter, Mrs. Shelley, together with the intuitive wisdom that Godwin so fondly recognised in her mother. It is remarkable, that, though an ardent theorist, he was never a partisan. His genius, character, and history, possess a rare individuality. He excited the interest of contemporaries as an innovator; while, as a standard writer, he is now best known for inventive talent in fiction. Adventurous in opinion, he was unassuming in life; recondite in mind, his habits were marked by simplicity. Wonderfully acute as an author, he was child-like and sincere in personal intercourse. Almost reckless in speculation, he was a pattern of methodical industry; intellectually discursive, his actual existence was one of routine; and while he startled the world with his doctrines, or fascinated them by his ingenuity, he remained the modest, quiet, plodding student, and gentle, domestic man.

Stewart defines common sense as "a temper of mind that views always, with coolness and accuracy, the various circumstances of situation, and receives due impressions without exaggeration from peculiar habits;" and this is undoubtedly the neutral ground,

where moderate reformers and liberal conservatives amicably meet. Those who occupy either extreme beyond, will only be recognised by the philosophical or enthusiastic minority. The wounds that Godwin sometimes inflicts upon our instinctive sympathies, are owing to the purely intellectual view he takes of man and life. "Ideas," says Lamartine, "are pitiless." Yet, extravagant and abstract as his opinions sometimes are, when regarded as practical hints, let us not perversely deny the truth and value of many of the principles upon which they are founded. Let us acknowledge, with him, the power and the responsibility involved in free-will,—the native independence of the soul of the extraneous and the conventional,—the wonderful achievements possible to earnest human purpose,—the limitless capacity of social and individual progress,—the incalculable benefits of discussion,—and, although these convictions may not justify to our minds Utopian schemes, on a broad scale, let them have their due influence in the process of self-emancipation and culture. If we cannot but agree with a late popular German author* that "the first step towards wisdom and tranquillity is to acknowledge the impossible; and the second not to desire it;" and that "he who wages war openly against prejudices, is as much a fanatic as he who defends them with every weapon," let us none the less acknowledge the high and rare obliga-

* Zschokke.

tion due those speculative reformers, the scope of whose reasoning and the influence of whose mental intrepidity has "planted the standard of humanity some furlongs farther into chaos."

The boldness of Godwin as a social reformer almost leads us to accept the definition some writer gives to courage, that it is only knowledge put in practice. We ascribe it in him partly to the same cause as that of Hazlitt's fearless criticism. He also was born a dissenter; and early acquired the habit of thinking for himself, and contempt for arbitrary dictation. However we may feel disposed to condemn his opinions or practice, we cannot but respect the conscious rectitude and calm bravery with which he acted upon and expressed his convictions. A more unaffected, manly, and truthful narrative than his Memoir of Mary Wolstencroft has seldom been written. This, and other of his books, reveal a man singularly true to himself, and uniting to profound and versatile knowledge, the simplicity of a child, in regard to the relation between thought and conduct, theory and practice, the abstract and the real. The truth is, Godwin lived in his own mind, which was literally to him a kingdom. His time was divided between his study and intellectual companionship. He was scarcely aware of the temptations that infect the weak, the undisciplined, and the ignorant. He reasoned for his peers, who constitute a very small minority. Yet, who that has ever truly reflected on his own emotions, does not feel, with him, that the

true object of education is to "awaken mind," that "hypocrisy is the worst evil," that "no man should be obliged to devote himself to the servitude of a galley-slave and the ignorance of a beast;" that "the greatest pleasures of which the human mind is susceptible, are the pleasures of consciousness and sympathy;" and that "the greatest of all human benefits, that at least without which no other benefit can be truly enjoyed, is independence." Godwin was an ardent lover of truth. He confesses that the desire of not being deceived was with him a passion; not less a passion was his pleasure in "analyzing the machinery of society," as in Political Justice, and of character, as in Caleb Williams and St. Leon. To a discriminating reader it is obvious, that it was because he so thoroughly appreciated eternal justice and conjugal love, not from enmity to religion or domestic faith, that he was professedly adverse to the technical forms of Christianity and marriage, to the essential spirit of which he paid such intelligent homage. But he experienced the usual fate of daring speculation;—from an idol, he became a by-word; from the highest popular renown, he was reduced to personal obscurity. Both extremes were equally unjust; and as a philosopher and a man of genius, though better appreciated, his due rank has not yet been assigned.

The great error of superficial reasoners on the subject of reform, is the denial of all benefit to climaxes of opinion. They see the most ultra theorists appa-

rently reconciled at last to the existent order of things; they hear the most sanguine advocates of change declare their views to have been extravagant; they behold the failure of revolutions; and find that, with the hardening of their own sensibilities in the mould of custom, and the new appreciation of repose and comfort which age induces, they can more easily than once it seemed possible, conform to the expedient and available; and, from all this, infer, with the chastened bard of Paradise, that

> "To know
> That which before us lies in daily life
> Is the prime wisdom; what is more, is foam,
> Or emptiness, or fond impertinence."

Or, if heroically constituted, they seek refuge in their personality, and act upon Carlyle's high doctrine—"over the Time thou hast no power; to redeem a world sunk in dishonesty, has not been given thee, solely over one man therein thou hast a quite absolute, uncontrollable power; him redeem, him make honest." Of a contemplative humour, and rich in mental wealth, the awakened Utopian may, on the other hand, simply feel impatient, and exclaim with the musing Prince,

> "The world is out of joint, O cursed spite!
> That ever I was born to set it right!"

Meek and alive to the sentiment of resignation, he, perhaps, will console himself with the beautiful thought of the poet,

> Piu val d'ogni vittoria un bel soffrire;

or, weighed down by the melancholy that haunts the sensitive and thoughtful, a hopeless conviction, like that which darkened the reveries of Shelley, may chill the visions of philanthropy, until he feels with that ideal reformer, that

> "The good want power but to weep barren tears,
> The powerful goodness want, worse need for them;
> The wise want love, and those who love want wisdom,
> And all best things are thus confused to ill."

But each and all these phases of reaction, in the spirit of reform, do not affect its destined issues nor invalidate its claims to efficiency. These rest on absolute laws, and can be demonstrated by history and life.

Speculative reformers, however, are unsatisfactory, as a general rule, because they are more critical than suggestive. Their eloquence and ingenuity is chiefly devoted to exposing defects; they make us painfully aware of the tyranny of custom, the iron bondage of social restrictions, and the lamentable departure from nature in the arrangements of life, without giving any definite hints, or inventing any practicable scheme, whereby our condition may be ameliorated. In a word, like the image-breakers of the Reformation, they illustrate how much easier it is to destroy than to create, to protest against what is than to realize what may be. Their works remind us of the wonderful improvement which medical science, in France, has attained in the discovery and natural

history of disease, and of the entire disproportion between this authentic insight and the remedial process; we are thus made to feel how little necessary relation exists between a diagnosis and a cure. This inadequacy is more or less obvious in the writings of all critics of society,—in Paine as well as Owen, in Rousseau not less than Emerson, in the socialist as well as the political optimist. Its excess, indeed, takes the form of agrarianism and infidelity; and, when apparent in all the unchartered license of disaffection, we cannot but respond to the appeal to natural sentiment and the logic of time-hallowed authority, which Burke so nobly uttered. Yet it should never be forgotten that this is a partial view of a great human interest. It is as unjust as it is unphilosophical, to shut our eyes to the transcendent merits of those magnanimous writers, who have dispassionately, yet with power, vindicated the primal rights of humanity, clearly pointed out the illusions of traditionary vassalage, rendered obvious the line of demarcation that separates the individual soul from the despotism of the mass,—held up the light of reason to the awful shadow we call public opinion; and proclaimed, without fear or favour, the absolute dictates of truth and justice. Especially worthy of honour is the reformer who has striven to do this through the medium of literature, by calm and persuasive arguments, by the written plea which the love of man and of right inspires. The office is high and sacred, the task difficult and responsible, and the

intention wise and benevolent; and if the spirit in which it is attempted be unselfish, sincere, and reverent, the least we can do is to accept the service with grateful candour.

Godwin's habits and disposition afforded a remarkable contrast to his theories. He was not one of those erratic men of genius, of spasmodical industry and fitful moods, but a calm, laborious, systematic writer, with a scholar-like gentleness and equanimity. Few modern authors have displayed greater versatility or perseverance. As a novelist he was one of the most original in the world, although his first adventure of this description was never equalled by any subsequent effort, and only approached in one instance. In biography, besides his Memoirs of the Nephews of Milton, and "Lives of the Necromancers," his "Life of Chaucer" is a standard work; his "Remarks on Judge Eyre's Charge to the Jury," according to an able critic, would alone have made the reputation of any lawyer; and while keeping a bookseller's shop under an assumed name in London, he is said to have written quite a library of juvenile books, some of which contributed to Newberry's fame. In addition to all this literary labour, Godwin was the author of volumes of essays, sketches and history. He contributed to the new Annual Register; his first publication was a small collection of sermons, and his last an attempt to revive his original fame, as a novelist, by a new romance. He also composed a tragedy, and a treatise on Sepulchres, besides nume-

rous incidental, and anonymously printed writings in almost every department of literature. It is, therefore, evident, that his talents were amply vindicated, and his renown secured by productions wholly devoid of any extraordinary theories. He was not obliged to resort to these to obtain a name. Already he had achieved enough to satisfy ordinary ambition, without straying from the prescribed walks of elegant letters. Moreover, he was by nature a student of genuine mental aptitudes, not fitted to shine in conversation, and indebted for his triumphs to methodical industry and profound reflection. There was no inkling of the visionary or the fanatic in his manners, tone of character, or the order of his life. Accordingly, when he undertook to analyze society and "pry into abuses," it was from the love of truth for its own sake, and by the insight of a philosophical mind. He wished to enlighten and convince, not to inflame and bewilder. Hence his pre-eminent claim to the title of a literary reformer.

It is thus that chivalric sentiment imparts bravery to the written thought, and the instinct of reform kindles the pages of writers, who need no such peculiarity to insure their fame. Paradise Lost and Comus render us forgetful of the Treatises on "Divorce," and the "Liberty of Unlicensed Printing," from the same fearless mind; and yet, in the latter writings, Milton showed himself as fearless and loyal a reformer as Knox; and courageously anticipated the views of a maturer stage of human progress.

The history of religious controversy, of political revolutions, and of science, is little more than an index of the encroachments of reform upon the domain of conventionalism and prescription. All that is practicable in the system of Fourier, may be found in hints more or less suggestive, which the generous poetry and rhetoric of the age conveys. Labour, trade, education, domestic life,—all the prominent interests of society, have been and are still the objects of a reform which has found its most just and enlightened expression in popular literature; and this is an element so practical, so near the welfare of each individual, that the boldest utilitarian is compelled to acknowledge, that literary art may be directly and intrinsically effective in the interests of actual life.

Let us recall but a moiety of what it has accomplished within the century. The eloquence of Erskine put an end to the worst abuses of the law of libel and constructive treason. The writings and speeches of Wilberforce, Sharpe, and Clarkson, induced the abolition of the slave-trade. Bentham's philosophy fired parliamentary orators, and led to the reformation of the common law; and while Romilly's arguments secured the amelioration of the penal code, those of Mackintosh and Brougham effected a like modification in civil jurisprudence. Cobbett's Register, Sydney Smith's witty reviews, Elliot's corn-law rhymes, Father Mathew's exhortations, Hood's Song of the Shirt, Hunt's Examiner strictures,

Dickens's pictures of boarding schools and poor houses, Landor's classic newspaper articles on late revolutionary movements, Tennyson's Princess, and many other familiar examples, indicate how earnestly the most select intelligences of the age have made literature, even in its ideal manifestations, the vehicle and the weapon of reform. Madame de Staël and Chateaubriand were persecuted for writing in favour of principles adverse to Napoleon's influence; but their works appealed to the reason of the few, and were of limited influence; lettered genius has now learned how to carry on its holy crusade, in forms that penetrate the common mind, and stir the universal heart.

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